

Punch

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IN THE MATTER of portraiture, Sutherland and Annigoni fans may differ, but when the gentle art of imbibing is under discussion all schools of thought agree that 'Myers', in its way, is a masterpiece.

You will find these mixes simply delightful and vice versa:
MYERS & Bitter Orange, or Bitter Lemon, or Tonic, or Ginger Ale.
Serve as cold as possible.



PUNCH

Vol. CCXXXV No. 6175
DECEMBER 17 1958



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CHARIVARIA

MR. MACMILLAN'S blunt refusal to appoint an official historian for the Suez war has dashed Mr. Randolph Churchill's hopes of getting the job.

UNABLE to attend a National Playing Fields Association party the Duke of Edinburgh sent a brace of pheasants from his week-end shoot to be raffled. The winner, a keen souvenir-hunter, went through agonies deciding which to stuff, himself or the birds.

MEN exposed to higher altitudes, say U.S. space-travel experts, gain the ability to withstand higher altitudes. It's just getting started that's the trouble.

THOUGH all shifts are welcome to sustain interest in the arts, one or two sidelong looks were cast at the *News Chronicle* item describing how Lady Wheeler, at an exhibition opened by husband Sir Charles, "was showing an 80-guinea bust."

News that the U.S. Navy's new carrier had golf-balls driven off its flight-deck by four professional golfers as part of



its efficiency trials has started a rumour that Mr. Eisenhower may be getting a bigger and better Presidential yacht.

ALL the talk about the German industrial miracle looked pretty silly last week when a Luton spokesman disclosed

that Britain is making one-third of that country's plastic radio and television knobs.

"Around the head of the stair the faces of the little Nixon girls appeared. It was time for the Vice-President to have his evening meal."—*Daily Express*

Yum-yum.

THE season of goodwill was no time for the *Evening Standard* gossip man to say that, with the building of flats on what



is now the American Embassy's car-park "some of the repulsive sights in Grosvenor Square are to disappear."

NOTING the newly-married Lord Altrincham's dismissal of wedding-marches as "absolute monuments of vulgarity," fellow-progressives nevertheless regretted that he didn't feel the same about announcements in *The Times*.

THOSE who forget that Mr. Gaitskell got a first in economics at Oxford had a sharp reminder when he was asked how Labour proposed to finance its newly-proclaimed programme and answered "By increasing the nation's wealth."

Rare Aves

An extra shilling fare is to be charged on London taxis between midnight and 6 a.m.

RARE are the ne-ne and the whooping crane;

There's not a moa or dodo left alive; And rare as these next year will be the taxi

In London at 11.55.



Punch Diary

SIR ALAN HERBERT has now established his election headquarters at the Society of Authors' office. Interviewed, A. P. H. had nothing particular to say about such things as health, housing, education or unemployment: "I'm not against H.M. Government in general, it's the Home Office I'm after." Asked what was his attitude towards the Wolfenden Report recommendations, he said "For once I find myself in agreement with the two archbishops." He opened up rather more on the subject of deposits ("Not that I'm in fear of losing mine; after all, at Oxford in 1935 it was the official Conservative who lost his"). As he expressed it, "It's as if an umpire in a cricket-match were to say to the batsman 'You're out, and what's more, as you're out for a duck you will be hit on the head with a bat.'" With little more time to run and a serviceable majority in the House, the Conservatives can easily do with one seat the fewer. It would do them no harm, and Parliament a power of good, if A. P. H. were to get back to Westminster.

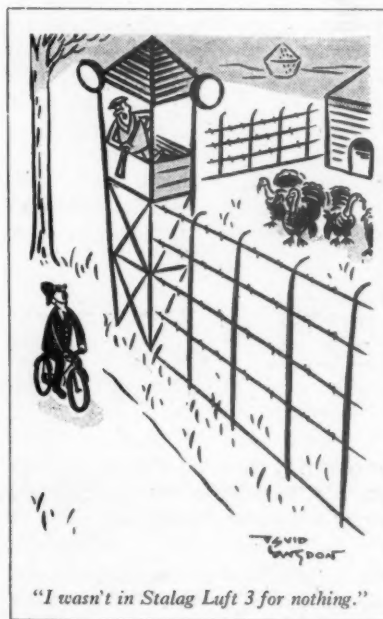
For the Kiddies

APART from four-stringed plastic Elvis Presley guitars suitable for six-year-olds, "Dolls' Trousseaux," imitation Sten guns which fire table-tennis balls, and small moon-rockets filled with Christmas crackers, the toy fairs this year are remarkable for the gruesome ingenuity of their space guns. I was particularly repelled by a supersonic gun with high frequency resonator, which is sold complete with explanatory notes. The space pilot, I read, looking

through the interplanetary transmission sight, squeezes the trigger and releases electrons from the energy condenser chamber, where the atoms are split. The energy thus created is controlled by the powerful gravitation field reactors, and also gives rise to a high frequency buzz. The energy then goes into the ignition discharge chamber to be converted into electro-magnetic waves, which in turn are sent through the cyclotronic chamber, intensified, naturally enough, by the electronic magnetic energizers, and finally shot out through the pointed end in the form of a supersonic ray "capable of travelling enormous distances into the depths of infinite space." I went away and bought a box of paints.

Bailey and Beer

THE Brisbane Test was a statistician's delight, but only '047 of the spectators (according to my calculations) could possibly qualify as statisticians. This explains the phenomenal consumption of beer during the match—something like 40,000 gallons. My own hope was that enough of this fluid would seep under the covers to produce a sticky dog and a swift end to the crawling proceedings. The Australians won decisively and deservedly, but the happiest sportsmen during the five long days must have been the handful of non-playing English cricketers who



took time off to go surfing and coral-hunting on the Great Barrier Reef. In saying this, however, I may be doing an injustice to Bailey.

Footprints in the Sands of Time

GEOLOGISTS pecking in the wake of excavators, like gulls behind the plough, have unearthed fossils of the Jurassic period, one hundred and thirty million years old, on the embryo London-Yorkshire motorway. But what science gains on the roundabouts it loses on the swings, for vandals have stolen the bones of a baby dinosaur embedded in a rock near Lyme Regis. While time immemorial yields up its secrets to the seeker after truth or loot of to-day, new treasures and problems are being laid down for the archaeologist of to-morrow; as these old bones were being found or filched in the shires Ben Lyon and Bebe Daniels were burying records of the first jokes ever used in "Hi! Gang" in the foundations of a new London building. The age—and ownership—of these is often debated acrimoniously among palaeontologists.

La Mort de Bohème

ARTISTS starving in garrets will always pack them in at the Paliseum; but artists starving in garrets, or even, with the additional complications of wife and children, in semi-detached houses, seem to have less hold on the public sympathy in real life. There are always cynics who point out that no one asked them to be artists and they could make an honest living as coal-heavers instead; but few will dispute that artists are necessary in a civilized land, and it is not always their fault if their style goes out of fashion or they are prevented by outside circumstances from practising their craft. The Artists General Benevolent Institution helps artists over their bad patches, and I commend it to readers. It lives at Burlington House, Piccadilly, W.1.

The first episode in "Henry and Lulu," a new series of stories by MONICA FURLONG, will appear next week.

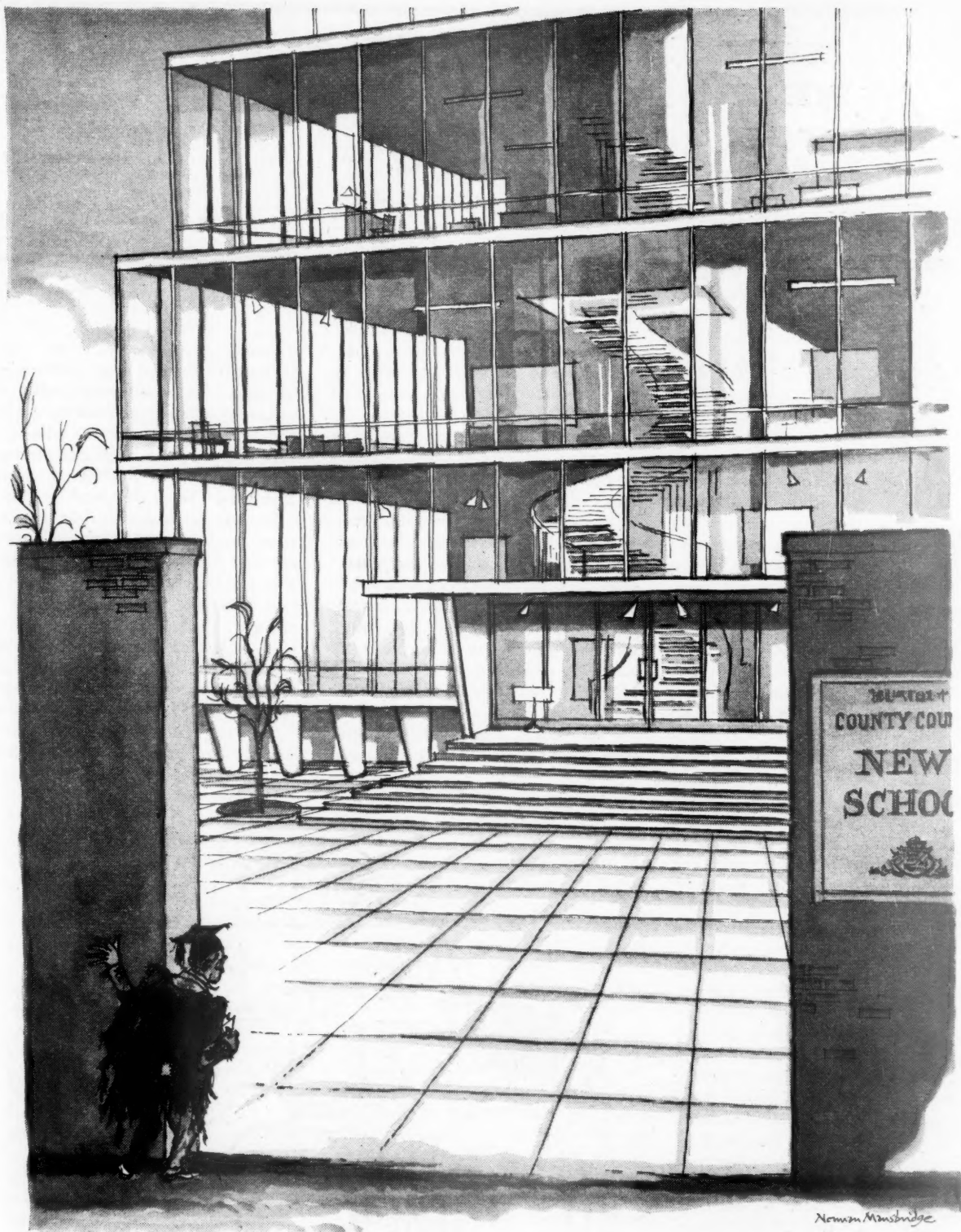
The fifth of Hewison's drawings of sporting personalities, HERB ELLIOTT, is on page 811 of this issue.

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BURNHAM SCALE

THE NEW BOOK OF SNOBS



In 1846-7 Thackeray wrote "The Snobs of England" in PUNCH, later reprinted as "The Book of Snobs." In this series snobbery is brought up to date, but the title decorations are from Thackeray's own drawings.

GWYN THOMAS on Education



THE Renaissance is down if not out. The written word as the prime tool of mental training shuffles to the exit like a slapped clown. The well-nourished, wide-ranging, literary mind is being told to take the earth seriously and to concentrate on one of the myriad banalities that make up physical science. Heat warms, ice cools, cars stall, things fall, light bends, motion ends. The passionate convolutions of poetry and art are to be pushed back out of the arena to make way for these clownish simplicities. The ancient educational aim of making a man's mind, through verbal communication only, a self-contained and instantly available theatre of dignity and grace has gone by the board. Our new line in sages, to achieve complete cogency, require half the taxman's take and a vast, minatory, barbed-wire vault in which to track and reproduce the tedious parlour-tricks of nature.

We may not in future produce an Aristophanes, a Shakespeare or a Keats. But we shall without question produce with our own elfin hands a thunderstorm, an earthquake and a few Peloponnesians with stiff collars and a wonder cure for the phthisis which they didn't have when we got around to them in the first place. The edict has gone forth against cerebration in loneliness and for its own sweet sake. The educable young are now directed to the dour team-work of acolytes all involved in some crass bit of conjuring to sharpen the tempo of death, transport or digestion.

The life of the intelligent, from the fifteenth century onwards, was cheap and exciting. Given quietness, a few companions and access to a few books that have dealt on a level above the probation officer's with the rhythm of man's anguish and joy, you had the makings of a university of exhilaration. To-day the highly intelligent, dragooned into laboratory techniques and patient, objective observation of external nature (traditionally an imperative in the syllabus of all the best village idiots), will have, from early adolescence on, an education which will be dear and dull. Muffled, brilliant mice behind their wainscotings of obtusely tribal secrecy.

Ever since the end of the Middle Ages when the priest, the peasant and

the artisan imposed their own curious limitations on the scope of thought and discussion, the witless, those malevolent and so dangerous ones, the unimaginative and pompous, have been planning their own peculiar Night of the Short Thoughts. True, they have had their moments of imbecile intransigence when the fanatically literate, who hold the wall against the gutterine hordes who yearn for the womb-like peace of an unschooled world, have for a moment dozed. Their dream has ever been to banish the pain of difficult thought, the most terrible rod an evolving species can make for its own bare back. They have destroyed the books and the bodies of people whose love of reason has slapped hard at their



"As a date he's strictly O level."



"Steady, Cynthia—I've made enough sacrifices for that boy of ours already."

bijou brows and confounded their Neanderthal slogans. But in the main they have been content to stand in sullen obedience behind the politicians who have accepted the ideal of a broad, verbal culture and those aristocrats on whom some part of this ideal has rubbed off. But now their hopes are rising, as the Classics and the Humanities rush to their eclipse.

A fistful of digital expertise is now to be worth a headful of imaginative brilliance. And the Morlocks rejoice and the tender Eloï trace the tattoo of toothmarks on their sensitive pelts. Under cover of those prim experimenters to whom the laboratory is the Ark of the Covenant, the proponents of an aseptic coolness for a species whose trade mark is an untidy heat, the turnip-heads will advance to power. The poet will perish on a pyre of bunsen burners tended by a world full of glassy-eyed intellectual vestals, virgin of any of the authentic raptures that first planted warmth in the entrails of our tribe.

People who have never been able to tell Macbeth from a hole in their kilts will demand the total proscription of

Shakespeare from our schools where a brief perusal of *The Merchant* or *Twelfth Night* might even now be impeding that last bit of research that keeps us from the moon, the spiritual home and eventual hecatomb of the stifling bores who are now directing the main flow of our educational budgets. Men who were carted off to the clinic with third-degree strokes after their first encounter with the Accusative Case and the Definite Articles will blandly and patriotically press for the end of language-teaching because languages lack symmetry, are encrusted, like life, with the most brazen absurdities and may interfere with a boy's devotion to the artificial logic we are able to apply to the monkey-puzzles of mathematics. Municipal and national leaders who have had no truck with rhyme since they failed to master the faster-flowing reaches of "Eskimo Nell" will ask for the acquisition of the nearest flat patch as a site for a new technical college, will choke the nearest nightingale and will accept as an amendment the burning of all books by Dryden, Byron and Lorca to help some heat-trap like Zeta in its

appointed task of getting us from Aberbeeg to Abersychan in ten seconds flat, and I mean flat.

As against all this I will be told of those remarkable performers who manage to lie with equal serenity on the slopes of the Higher Physics and the Higher Verse, whose nerves purr as contentedly at the touch of six distinct literatures as at the sight of a reactor. These genial polymaths are as rare as radium and are the product of the butt-end of a cultural tradition which they are now devitalizing and will destroy. What they will land us with after a thousand limpid disquisitions on how we can get the best of both worlds is a multitude of bored and mediocre laboratory assistants most of whom will have been denied a fair expression of those verbal artistic talents which might have brought them a decent fulfilment. The men who are directing the present educational swing in favour of scientific teaching are still sophisticates in the old university tradition, fluently ambivalent in their cultural loyalties. But wait until the morons take over, the uninhibited bustlers who would trade

Verdi's *Requiem* and *King Lear* for one well-washed retort.

In the meantime the schools rush to meet their darkish and rather shabby destiny. The amount of boiling, measuring, counting, mixing rises daily. Books are pushed into far corners to make way for the running tide of fetid pipettes. The Science VIth is now a procession of white-coated votaries. The Arts VIth, the few beagles who are still panting in the wake of man's history and his spirit's expression, is in full

retreat and will probably have to conciliate the Education Committee by pausing at intervals in their condemned pursuits to launder the snowy coats of the alchemical wizards. By 1968 every school will have its own H-bomb and a short way with H.M.Is. And by the same date I should say that the standard of written expression among most of our graduates will be below 11-plus grading. Parsimonious Boards of Governors will sell the more physically interesting Arts students to the Biology Department

to pay for the new cyclotron in the Physics section. Those who turn away giddy from this whirling jig of weighing and probing will meet as a kind of Mafia by moonlight to swap a line of Rilke for an aphorism of Gide before going to immolate themselves on the electrified fences of the nearest Gamma-ville.

I have been told that these regressive and dangerous rejections of mine date back to a period in Grammar School when I laboured at a forge in the metal-work shop. This course had been thrown into the curriculum of the non-scientists to make sure that we would not be intellectualized out of any further usefulness to the species. The industrial background of our ancestors had been long and consistent, from Bronze Age pixies to Steam Age colliers, and we were kept on a cunning tether. When our ideas became too arrogantly Platonic we could always be whipped back into the nearest foundry. It did not work in my case. I was an inept metal worker. I set the iron and allied trades farther back than they had ever been since things picked up at Jarrow. The forge at which I had worked had had its flues blocked up by some late Luddite and I spent every other week-end in a rough version of the oxygen tent. There was also, in this workshop, a mighty and ancient machine, just barely post-Newcomen. It had a wheel large enough to have been doing Europe a bit of good. No machine could have been slower to start. While the teacher was working at it, cursing at it and filling us in on the functions of the various rods and belts, he would have me hanging on to the big wheel as a kind of counter-weight. I hung well, for there were moments, even in that hellish ambience, when I wanted to prove earnestness. The teacher would give no warning when the thing burst into life and the wheel went into action and I would rise like a firework. At times I have felt that the whole purpose of this exercise was to have my arms torn out. That way I could have been dropped from the metalwork course without fuss or theorizing.

Another part of my life in that crypt saw me being given a monstrous lump of iron and a file and then told "Wear it away." The teacher would then give me an idea of the best angle at which to file, fit the iron into a vice, and I was off.



"Kids nowadays seem to think that they've only got to ask for a thing and they get it."

I can claim to have been the hub of some of the longest and most inconsequential bits of filing ever to have been done outside the context of gaol-breaks. Then, after some disastrous session at the forge with a delivery of wet coke, the teacher told the Head that my attitude was putting the whole future of smelting in doubt. I was exiled to a grove of languages and literatures from which, since, I have only peeped out now and then to observe the worsening weather inside the world's wits.

I got out from under just in time. Twenty years later the presentation of manual techniques would have been much better, more insidious. My father could well have weakened in his pre-Druidic hatred of industry and allowed some glib pedagogue to aim me at a career in geophysics. I would have been there, trapped, manipulating those little weights, bringing those flasks to the boil, chipping rocks and probably riding right at the head of the More-Pay-For-Scientists parade in Fletcher's biggest trolley.

Am I an aurochs lowing in a too swiftly fallen night? Does this mania to be excluded from the most potent contemporary cult rest on a genuine incapacity or a real philosophic revulsion? Do I think that the classical, book-centred, literary education was a kind of course in compassion that served to sweeten the human lump and that without it the thoughts of man about men will become more boorish and sinisterly loveless? I have, at odd midnight moments, tried to reform, have fought with passion to see the growing pantomime of laboratory antics as something other than noisome irrelevancies. I report little progress. Einstein I can take, for his sad humility brings him into the mainstream of reassurance. But my heart hits the floor at the sight and thought of the crew of bombardiers, star-splitters and tinkers he helped to beget.

I have a dream. It begins off-key and bitter. I have just been writing singing commercials for deuterium, and in the seen advertisement I am the very cup in which is held the water which will power space-ships and one laundry for the whole of Asia. Then I see a river bank. It is quiet, it is cool, in contrast with the lunatic heat and din that most human activity now wears like a pair of idiot heads. To the river bank come a



group of men, like Abelard and his friends, who on the banks of the Seine, in reed huts, drawn by some mysterious appetite for light from the corners of Europe, set up a great new university of "more human letters." I engage in a little catechism with every new arrival.

"You have looked deep down into the heart of nature?"

"Fifteen years with the Geophysical Junta. I have seen the heart."

"How is it?"

"Black, treacherous, and, oh God, so boring."

"Good. Do you feel any shudder of a wish to boil anything?"

"No. Coolness is king."

"Do you believe in splitting things?"

"No. I believe in a rough kind of integrity. If things don't naturally want

to expose their middles, leave them alone, I say. What if some supernaturally wise and eternal thing came along with an urge to split the human?"

"Good. To dissect anything?"

"No. As little as my wish to be dissected."

"Good. To perform acts of addition or subtraction?"

"No. For me, two and two can do anything they like, except breed."

Other writers in this series will be:

**PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE
SIRIOL HUGH-JONES
HENRY LONGHURST
THE REV. SIMON PHIPPS
STEPHEN POTTER
J. B. PRIESTLEY
GEORGE SCHWARTZ
FRANCIS WILLIAMS**

The Top Tippable Ten

By H. F. ELLIS

I SUPPOSE, if asked to name, very quickly, the Ten Most Tippable Characters, the average man would write down Waiters, Porters, Taximen, Car-park Attendants, Cloakroom Attendants, Programme Sellers, Commissionaires, Chambermaids, Boots, Guards, Hall Porters and men who give your back a couple of flicks with a brush in restaurant wash-rooms. Such at least are the categories that spring automatically to my own mind; and now that I look at them more attentively I find that they number twelve. That is a defect easily remedied by the application

of a little honesty. The first three on the list are in for good, as far as I am concerned, because I am unable even to imagine not tipping them. So are Car-park Attendants because they are on the whole undemanding and an element of free-will enters into the gift. Cloakroom Attendants are out, not because I resent paying to have my hat watched for an hour but because of the saucers they put out on the counter. Into such a coldly off-hand begging relationship I will not enter; nor, to judge by what I see in the saucers, will most of my fellow theatre-goers either. Programme

Sellers are out because I never dream of giving them anything and none of them seems to resent it. Commissionaires, though I often dream of giving them something, are out too, because there is no sum of money which is adequate to their status and yet not a ludicrously exaggerated payment for shutting a taxi door. Besides, once the door is shut, the problem solves itself. Boots and Hall Porters are in for much the same reason as Waiters, Porters and Taximen. It is true that I have in my time given exceptionally magnificent or unusually offensive hall porters the slip; but not to include them in any list of Most Tippable Characters would make nonsense of the whole exercise. Chambermaids are in for a very different reason. They are the only class or category who are normally tipped *in absentia*, and not to tip them is therefore so easy that only a slyboots of the most contemptible kind would grasp the opportunity. Any hotel guest who has ever left nothing on the dressing-table in order to have another half-crown to give the hall porter had better take a long straight look at himself before it is too late.

We are left now with Guards and Wash-room Attendants, both of whom must be in. Guards are not highly tippable in the sense that they *expect* tips, but that makes it all the more pleasurable and knowing to tip them for some special service when the need arises—for seeing that a small nephew changes trains at Didcot, to take an obvious example. The giving of money to wash-room men is certainly among the most insane of all civilized practices, but they have made good their claim to a place in the Top Ten by the exercise of a wise moderation. Alone among the tippable classes they have stood firm against the insidious tide of inflation. The sixpence that was right for a brush-off in the 'twenties is still—unless I have grown insensitive with age—adequate to-day.

The exclusion of Cloakroom Attendants as well as Commissionaires and Programme Sellers has, I now see, brought my original list down to nine. I therefore gladly restore all those members of the first-named profession who do *not* put out saucers. They are a different breed altogether, often



coming right round outside their counters to help you on with your coat, and there is a particular satisfaction—the small glow that accompanies any exercise of a man-of-the-world adroitness—to be gained from finding a coin with the left hand while the right is being urged into somebody else's sleeve. So there are my Tippable Ten. Others, I don't doubt, who live more exotic or more provincial lives will wish to make minor excisions or additions. The claims for inclusion of men who deliver coal or goods forwarded by rail are at least arguable. But my list will, I believe, command general agreement.

A far more vexed and difficult problem arises when we come to consider annual tipping. To whom, one is bound to ask at this season, should the time-honoured Christmas Box be given?

There was a time, in the country at any rate if I can trust the recollections of early youth, when the matter was comparatively straightforward. The Postman and the Paperboy were unquestionably the Top Two. These, in their annual way, were as immutably tippable as Porters and Cabmen in theirs. After them came a variable and to some extent optional collection of Boys—the Butcher's Boy, the Baker's Boy, the Grocer's Boy—who got a Christmas Box provided they had been about their duties for the best part of a year and were generally regarded by the household as "civil and willing." If the Butcher's Boy was known to be responsible for the drawings in indelible pencil on the back doorposts he got nothing. Apart from these, and of course the domestic and garden staff (if kept), I cannot remember any regular Christmas beneficiaries. If money was handed to the Rural District Council Dustmen I have no recollection of seeing it done; indeed, so strange are the tricks of memory, I have no recollection even of Rural District Council Dustmen. It will be noted that, apart from the household and the one notable exception of the postman, Christmas Boxes were for the younger set.

In the suburbs, in 1958, the situation is far more complex. The paperboy comes so early that he is never seen, and there is no way of telling that the young fellow who rings the bell at this time of the year and announces, with his hand not quite extended, "I'm the

paperboy," is not in fact a racketeer. He gets a tip of course, in case; but he gets less than he might if we were quite certain that this was not his first call on us for a twelvemonth. There is no Butcher's Boy. There is, however, a milkman, with a son old enough to be at Cambridge, who has the most tippable eye I ever saw. The Baker's Boy is in his forties. Even the postman presents unwonted difficulties, for there are several of him, appearing at different times of day and sometimes on foot, sometimes by car, more often on a bicycle. Is one to tip all these postmen, and if so in what ratio? A man who is on the doorstep delivering bills by 8 a.m. has clearly done a finer, more gruelling job than the leisurely noontide postman—though not, perhaps, if the former came by car and the latter laboriously by bicycle. And which of them, in fact, came most often by what, when? In any case, at Christmas time when the urge to do the decent thing is strong upon one, all three regular postmen disappear and in their places come a strange bewildering horde of undergraduates, rankly untippable in their roll-neck sweaters. Would it not perhaps be better, despite all that has been written here against saucers, if the senior postman brought a book?

I am well aware that there is already no little muttering in this district against the Dustman's Book. What right, housewives ask each other, have the Borough Council Dustmen to send a representative round who practically *demands* a tip? "The dustman's book, lady," he says, handing it over, and there before her unwilling eyes the inevitable net is spread. "No. 2, 5s.; No. 4, 5s.; No. 6, 5s.; No. 8 [typically] 7s. 6d.; No. 10, 7s. 6d.; No. 12 [bless them!] 5s." Against her own number there is as yet a sad, compelling blank. She has a strong feeling, while searching about in her bag, that this bare-faced soliciting is totally opposed to the traditional spirit of Christmas, to the old conception of presents freely offered in token of gratitude for services selflessly rendered.

The housewife is utterly mistaken here. The dustmen's methods, as anybody can discover by looking up "Christmas-box" in the *O.E.D.*, are strictly in accordance with the best and earliest usage. "**C-box**," the good book says, "a box in which gratuities were collected at Christmas, by apprentices,



"May I remind you Miss Smith that the little bell on your typewriter rings to warn you that you are coming to the end of a line."

etc., and afterwards shared." I see nothing voluntary about that. The dustmen have, if anything, toned down the ancient ritual, for the book that they now present in lieu of a box at least does not rattle. It is true that apprentices were younger, and therefore perhaps more suitable recipients (like Paperboys and Grocer's Boys) of coins at Christmas. But dustmen are only boys at heart. If it were not so, would they lark about and sing and roll the lids of dustbins to and fro at six o'clock on a dark December morning?

Let us by all means then write "2s. 6d." (boldly) in the space against "No. 14"—and take it out, if necessary, on the milkman's acquisitive, untraditional eye.

"Air Marshal Lord Tedder and Bruce Seton, who plays Inspector Fabian on television, seemed most friendly yesterday . . . 'We keep it pretty dark,' Bruce told me, 'but Lord Tedder is my brother-in-law . . . I don't like to cash in on the connection . . .'"

Daily Mail

How about Lord Tedder?

Dig that Crazy Bed

By J. B. BOOTHROYD

WITH many others, no doubt, I was interested by last week's *Observer* gardening piece recommending the rhubarb-lover to feed this December-planted beauty on an old flock mattress. "Dig it in," wrote Mr. L. D. Hills, "at the rate of about a barrow-load to four square yards . . . buy one from a second-hand furniture shop . . . Confirm that it is not cotton but wool, a slow-acting organic nitrogen

manure that needs supplementing with a pound of bonemeal to that area for immediate rhubarb requirements." I quote at length in case anyone thinks I am making this up. There is nothing more wearisome for the commentator on fact than the suspicion that he has invented the fact.

Frankly, though, I am not feeding my rhubarb on mattresses this year. I've tried for two years without making a real success of it. In December, 1956, I didn't even get the mattress out of the shop, owing to the unco-operativeness of the proprietor, a Mr. Bidding, of Southwark. He was a man of some individuality, and got the idea that I was trying to make a fool of him.

"What size bed?" he asked, going to the back of the shop and stirring a pile of mattresses with his foot.

"I'm not sure," I said. "I should think about ten feet by twelve."

He said he'd never heard of a bed that size.

"It's a rhubarb bed," I told him, and he came back and leant on the counter, and said that the date was December 17, not April 1, and he'd got a busy morning, with three second-hand dressing-tables to deliver at Loughton, Essex. He said he hadn't got a mattress ten feet by twelve, and no pigeon's milk either.

It took me a minute or two to calm him down. When I said I'd settle for an ordinary double-bed size he pulled one out and brought it. He said he had the same thing in blue. I said the colour didn't matter, because it would have earth all over it.

"Earth?" he said.

"Never mind—I'm sorry I mentioned it. Tell me," I said, "how many barrow-loads of stuff do you suppose there is here?"

He said he'd never sold mattresses by the barrowload. He tried to take it away again, but I hung on to my end. I said I'd take it, provided he'd confirm that it was filled with slow-acting organic nitrogen manure, and he wrenched it out of my hands, splitting two finger-nails (mine—I didn't ask about his) and went to the back of the shop and telephoned the police.

That was 1956. But last year, when I'd got up enough nerve to tackle the problem again, I went to a local man, and adopted a more flat-footed approach. I told him the whole plot from the start, and apart from asking for the money before I took the mattress out to the car, he behaved very reasonably. I drove home in high spirits, under the impression that my troubles were over. At that time, of course, I had not considered the technique of actually digging a mattress into clay soil at the rate of about a barrowload to four square yards.

For those who plan to do this as a result of Mr. Hills' article I would recommend, first, a particularly sharp spade and teeth not in need of dentistry. Not that the teeth are actually employed in tearing the ticking. But the sensation of driving even a sharp spade into a strongly-finished flock mattress sets them on edge. Anyone who has bitten a tennis-ball will understand my meaning. Secondly, ensure a clear operating area of at least twice the size of the bed; the rhubarb-bed, that is. Once the mattress is breached the contents tend

ERIC AND PAM? I DON'T
KNOW ANY ERIC AND PAM



NOR DO I

ERIC AND PAM?



THE ERIC MUST BE
ONE OF YOUR OLD FLAMES



MUCH MORE LIKELY
THAT PAM'S ONE OF YOUR
EX - GIRL-FRIENDS



ERIC AND PAM?



to flow freely, as with fire-fighting foam, and can cover an average back-garden in no time, including climbing the summerhouse steps and engulfing garden-rollers, heaps of peat covered with tarpaulins, etc., in no time. The task of controlling the moving, creeping mass is especially difficult for hay-fever addicts or suffers from kindred diseases, as continuous sneezing may set in, eyes stream, and feet itch unbearably as the penetrating fragments creep over wellington tops. In addition, wives and neighbours may panic and summon various emergency services whose presence merely adds to the confusion.

In my own experiment of last year any idea of ultimate rhubarb had gone with the wind after the first five minutes, and my only concern was to recapture the monster I had loosed. In the end, and with the assistance of a strong laundryman and two youths who had come to deliver the paraffin, we succeeded in throwing up rectangular earthworks and containing the enemy. The providential paraffin was then poured over it and the whole set alight. It burned for three days, and my wife and I took turns to sit up with it at night. A curious circumstance was that the night sky was filled with springs. These had been firmly gripped by flock until the flames did their work, but were then released in rather picturesque red-gold showers, some falling, with a dramatic hiss, as far away as the lily-pond of our next door neighbour but one.

I have not yet decided whether to try again next year. This year we are still looking for something that will grow on nine inches of charcoal with a light sprung-steel dressing.



Growing Old

YOU'RE older still—I envy you, my friend,
So sweet and placid you await the end.
You'll make a graceful exit from the stage:
But I, alas! am angered by old age.

Relax, they say, that Youth may have its due.
But they forget the Inland Revenue.
I'm on the treadmill; I am in a cage:
So do not ask me to enjoy old age.

The mind, of course, is still a brilliant lamp,
But then, I'm handicapped by writer's cramp:
The wrist is weary if I scrawl a page.
I'm sorry, but I do resent old age.

I should be glad to watch the angry gale,
But I am itching to be hoisting sail:
So my neuritis puts me in a rage.
You can't imagine how I hate old age.

You do? You smile. I fancy you applaud.
Is all that sweet placidity a fraud?
Some facts philosophy can not assuage.
I'll bet a bob that you resent old age.

A. P. H.

I SUPPOSE THEY COULDN'T
POSSIBLY BE MR. AND MRS. BROWN ...

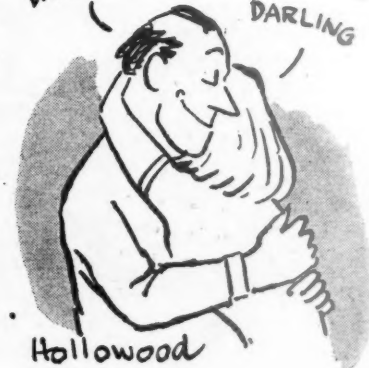


YOU MEAN THE BOSS
AND HIS WIFE!



DARLING

DARLING



And Take Your Aunt Edna

By B. A. YOUNG

Handing over £1,000 to the Royal Court Theatre on behalf of his firm, a businessman lamented that they had not discovered "a new Shakespeare, devoid of sex, blasphemy, anti-monarchy and all those horrid things which are so sensational but don't make true theatre."

AS it happens, I have a script handy which exactly fills this requirement, and if the Artistic Director of the Royal Court would like to see it he has but to pick up the telephone. It is called *Hamlet*, and is based on a play by Bernard Kops, but with the action transferred to mediaeval Denmark.

The plot is somewhat complex, but runs roughly like this:

King Claudius of Denmark, a paragon of all the virtues, has granted euthanasia to his brother, king before him, to relieve him of the burden of affairs of state; and has married the late King's wife Gertrude, at great personal sacrifice, in an attempt to assuage her grief. Hamlet, the Queen's son by her first husband, though in many ways all that a royal prince should be, is disappointed at his failure to succeed to the throne.

"O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that our penal system had not fix'd
Its canon 'gainst self-slaughter! Oh
my word!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this
world!"

he sighs; but suddenly all is changed. Hamlet's friend Horatio brings him a letter which the old King had left with his solicitor to be opened after his death. He had meant to have the Queen's bedchamber redecorated before he died; but he forgot until it was too late, and his last wish was that Hamlet should have it done, without telling the Queen, as a surprise for her:

"Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
Devoid of luxury and badly dress'd"

he says.

Hamlet swears to obey the King's posthumous command, but his naturally indecisive character causes him to keep putting it off. In an attempt to get the Queen to sleep somewhere else for a while, he pretends to be mad; but everyone thinks his madness is caused by his love for the Lord Chamberlain's teenage daughter Ophelia.

In a rather effective scene Hamlet arranges for a touring company from Copenhagen to put on a play in the palace, in which one of the sets is a parody of the Queen's bedchamber, with everything made even more ugly and old-fashioned than it really is. The King, who knows bad taste when he sees it, takes offence at having his wife's bedroom shown on the stage; the play is halted, and after the King has left there is a big *scène à faire* between Hamlet and his mother on the rival merits of "contemporary" and "period." Polonius, who joins them, trips over a length of tapestry he is showing and impales himself on a mobile: off-stage, of course.

The Queen is terribly upset by this, and in order to get Hamlet away from the Court so that he won't worry her with his redecoration schemes the King arranges for him to go to England to visit the Design Centre. But the day Hamlet lands is a Bank Holiday, so he comes straight back to the Court. There he is horrified to learn that



"Dites 'fromage' . . ."

Ophelia, having become crazy over acting, has gone to Los Angeles.

Her brother Laertes, anxious to come face to face with the man who comforted his father's last moments and loved his departed sister, now hurries home from the south of France, where he has been staying; and the last scene in the play rises to a climax of general rejoicing as Hamlet, Laertes, the King and the Queen join hands and vow everlasting friendship. (There is some effective comedy as they get their cups mixed up while they are drinking toasts to each other.) The Queen agrees to let Hamlet redecorate her room; and he is just about to go upstairs ("Good-night, sweet prince," Horatio calls after him poetically, "and flights of angels sing thee to thy desk!") when the British Ambassador enters with Silas K. Fortinbras of Tenth Century Fox, bringing the news that the latter has given Ophelia a five-year contract and wants to begin with a romance of the Danish Court. "Go," calls Fortinbras to his staff as the curtain falls, "bid the cameramen shoot."

This play, entirely free from the sex, blasphemy, anti-monarchy, murder, suicide, incest, insanity, war, coarse language, dealings with the supernatural and all those other horrid things which don't make true theatre, is held by all who have read it to be much better suited to twentieth-century audiences than any version of the story to have appeared so far. The chief part is absolutely made to measure for Tommy Steele, and some of Ophelia's numbers, in particular one called "How should I your true love know?", are naturals for the top ten.

If Mr. George Devine should decide to produce it at the Royal Court, he might also like to take an option on another script which I am at present working on. This is called *Richard III*, and it tells, briefly, how that handsome and amiable monarch co-operated with Clarence, Hastings, Rivers, Gray, Buckingham and the Princes in the Tower in his brilliant progress to the throne of England, and of his tender and romantic courtship of the beautiful widows of the Prince of Wales and Edward IV. If by any chance Mr. Devine doesn't want it I think I can say with confidence that it is well worth £1,000 of any public company's money to put it on somewhere else.



Against Hawkes

By PETER DICKINSON

IT is a pity that Commander Hawkes, o' "Back o' Beyond," Ardingly, Sussex, is not the lonely hero he seems when he suggests that the Transport Commission should put up its railway fares by roughly fourpence in the pound. It is true that the Commission also wants the fares raised, but Commander Hawkes is not concerned with rescuing railways in distress from the dragon bankruptcy; *his* increase is designed to compensate the Commission for the money it will lose if it implements the Hawkes rules, which would allow second-class passengers to sit in first-class carriages without paying an excess charge—provided there are no empty second-class seats on the train.

As a second-class passenger of so deep a dye that I still think of myself as third class, I am passionately against Hawkes. His suggestions, though they smack of democracy, in fact offend the fundamental rights of the individual—in this case the first-class passenger. The white-ticket holder has paid the extra money involved for one of a variety of reasons—because his colleagues go

first-class, because his neighbours don't, because it gives him a sense, independent of British Railways, of having arrived. On a train I travelled on in Galway before the war the third-class passengers all had to nip out and cut peat when the engine ran out of fuel. The first-class passengers were excused. But most white-ticket holders have paid for a far more sensible and valuable thing—elbow-room. It isn't the antimacassars; it isn't the different pattern on the upholstery; it's the pleasure of not having one's neighbour's pipe in one's ear, his newspaper-arm across one's nose. This is a pleasure as solid and marketable as a bottle of wine, and British Railways market it to those who wish to pay for it. In view of this I am shortly going to start pestering the Transport Tribunal with the Dickinson rules. These will allow a green-ticket holder to sit in a first-class carriage provided he pays the excess charge and apologizes all round. But if they feel the interloper genuinely interferes with their comfort, white-ticket holders already in the compartment will be entitled to blackball him.



The Partisan

CHARLES REID takes coffee and soup with London's Left

ROBERTO LAGNADO is twenty-three, small and merry, with a smile like Ramsgate illuminations week, except that it lasts longer. He comes of a French-speaking family, is of Gibraltarian stock, lived in Egypt and Peru, was at school in Geneva and read English, French and Spanish literature at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada. His English accent sounds rather like that.

He works in a mammoth second-hand bookshop. That morning he showed a lady J.P. and M.B.E. from Halifax, Yorks., five Japanese love stories bound in green silk. While he was doing this a hunger pang skewered him.

"At half past twelve," he told himself, "I will go round the corner to the Partisan [coffee house, Carlisle Street, Soho, run by the *Universities and Left Review*] for a tenpenny bowl of farmhouse soup. On the way I will buy a long loaf of black bread that will last me for days."

Lagnado gets five pounds seven a week and pays three pounds for a room at Notting Hill Gate. Hunger pangs are frequent.

The lady J.P. bought the green silk amours; also Boswell's Journals; Disraeli's Letters, and Montaigne's Essays. All had been recommended by Lagnado because they were books he would have liked to buy himself. She shook him firmly by the hand and took a taxi to King's Cross.

The usual things were happening at the Partisan.

A neo-Fascist secretly removed the bung from one of the giant earthenware salt pots and tee-hee'd to himself.

At the self-service counter there was a run on stuffed cheese potatoes and lemon tea. Three members of the Bakunin Circle in denim suits queued for Irish stew and veg at three shillings a helping. Because of this they were written off as crypto-bourgeois by an S.P.G.B. table alongside the cash desk.

"What," asked a girl lab. asst. from within the lank tent of her hair, "is the S.P.G.B.?"

A thirty-year-old with a pipe and ice-grey eyes, obviously an electronic engineer, moved king's pawn to four, looked up from the board and explained. "Some people," he said, "think S.P.G.B. means Socialist Party of Great Britain. They are wrong. Actually it means Society for the Propagation of the Greater Bunk."

Lagnado came in at this point. He sat down at our table with his bowl of soup and sword of black bread. He smiled across at us dazzlingly.



"The soup's jolly good, no?" suggested Louise in reply to his smile.

"The soup," said Lagnado decisively, "is jolly good, yes. Also it is cheap. That makes it better. Bringing my own bread to eat with the soup makes it better still. I wish I felt the same about the décor." He nodded at distempered brickwork, electric fittings of the sort you see in distillery vaults, an oil-painting of domino-playing corpses for which Mr. Zulawsky was asking 150 gns.

We found "hideous" rather strong. In our view the décor of the Partisan typifies 1939 A.R.P. basement report centres (temporary) at their best.

"But," said Lagnado, "I love the feel of these rough wooden tables." He rubbed his palms on an unbevelled edge and closed his eyes ecstatically for a second. "The sense of touch," he added, "is important. I love the feel of lemon on my hands. At home the maids used to rub cucumber on their faces."

Somebody at the next table said with affected calm that Norman Mackenzie of *The N.S. and N.* had just come in. A red-bloused school teacher with black brows, black spectacle-frames and white-hot sibilants explained that in Middlesex, thank goodness, they had put a ssttop to sststreaming. A notice went up on the board about a debate of the Haldane Society on the Legal Status of Trade Unions. A green duffel and a mouse-coloured beard added their names to a Nuclear Disarmament Campaign volunteer list for audio-technicians and loud-speaker crews.

"Why," asked Lagnado, "do Socialists have to wear old trousers and beards to talk politics? In England everybody asks you what your politics are, and they expect you to have an answer. Now myself, I *have* an answer. I say 'I believe in Benevolent Despotism.' They are shocked and leave me alone with my little label, 'Benevolent Despot,' and we are all happy. Not that I ever met a Benevolent Despot. What are they like?"

"Do you mean," Louise asked cautiously, "that you aren't a Socialist?"

"Yes, that is what I mean," answered Lagnado radiantly. "I am *not* a Socialist. Is that bad? Perhaps when I am fifty I shall decide that Socialism is the best way for me. But not now. Now I must live. You cannot live in politics. When my brother was nineteen somebody gave him Karl Marx. If you

are nineteen and somebody gives you Karl Marx you simply have to be a Socialist. I was lucky. Nobody gave me Karl Marx. So I had love instead. Love and poetry."

Lagnado again closed his eyes. For a second his face was sealed beatitude. Then he opened his eyes so wide that the whites ringed his pupils, and began to talk of beauty. He said: "Quite ordinary women are so graceful. They have no idea. I know a girl in a coffee house who bends over the coffee machine with a quite perfect gesture. She is a maiden filling her urn at a spring. And women's voices! At the Windsor Castle on Campden Hill I heard a beautiful, mature woman, very svelte, ask for twenty cigarettes. Her English was very lovely, with a little French underneath. She was just like the Queen in *Henry V*. The film, I mean. I have seen *Henry V* six times all over the world, and every time I liked it a little bit less."

Lagnado sighed joyously. "Wherever you go you see such wonderful faces. Beautiful faces, intellectual faces. You

wonder who they are and where they are going. You follow them. And then (it's terrible!) you hear them speak. So often they have ugly voices. That is all wrong. Beautiful people should have beautiful voices. Everything about them should be beautiful."

Pregnant brief-case in one hand, mug of coffee in the other, Ritchie Calder threaded his way between tables and explained over his shoulder to a man similarly burdened about atomically-powered flying machines.

"Cats," modulated Lagnado, "are so proud. Quite often a strange cat won't eat from your hand. Only from the floor. I love proud cats. And proud waiters. I know a restaurant where the waiters are very proud. One day I gave one of them a shilling. The next time I went in he was prouder than ever and wouldn't speak to me. That is admirable."

"What are you going to do in life, what are you going to *be*?" asked Louise.

Lagnado laughed at the distempered ceiling.

"I do not know," he said. "I do not want to know. Not for a long time. I just want to live. How can you live if you are only thinking of *becoming* something? When you are twenty you can do anything and do it brilliantly. But only by doing nothing else. Then one morning you waken up and find you are forty, fifty, and it's too late for all the other things. I do not care what I do so long as I *live*. At present I sell second-hand books. Sometimes I do back-stage theatre jobs at night. Or I could sell newspapers. You see just as much of life selling newspapers as being the Prime Minister. It is a different life, but it is just as *much* life . . .

"Yes, I write. I am no genius. I am not Keats. I have still to learn my craft. One day I shall publish. Meanwhile there is always the word, the phrase. To find the phrase you want . . .! Or somebody else's phrase . . .! At home, where we had wine since I am so high, I always asked for Pouilly Fuissé because the name is so beautiful . . ."

A woman nibbling lumps of sugar recruited helpers for a youth club in Paddington. In one of the basement caves an angry boy in tight blue trousers with red side-stripes revealed to a worshipping small blonde with elbows on knees and cupped chin that the chairman of the Metal Box Company Ltd. is also a director of the Steel Company of Wales, so what hope was left for mankind?

Lagnado turned to music. He doted on Callas, he said, because she has a nose like the first girl's he fell in love with in Peru. After a wild Christmas Eve party in Vancouver he found himself flat and lonely on Christmas Day. Outside it was snowing. He put the Kathleen Ferrier *Kindertotenlieder* on the gramophone. He no longer felt flat but filled with happiness and thought he understood everything, but everything, including Deity, Destiny, Infinity, Eternity and all the subordinate ys, apart (I hoped) from those three convicted con men, Libert, Equalit and Fraternit.

☆

Brush Up Your Sales Techniques

"ANTIQUE VIOLIN CASE
AS USED IN CHICAGO
FOR TOMMY-GUNS: 25/-."

Advertisement in a Soho shop window



Keep Them In, Alderman Says

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS discusses a new aspect of the racial troubles

THE serious class riots in which Etonians have been recently involved at the railway stations of Datchet and Wrybury must cause all responsible citizens to ask themselves whether this nation can any longer afford to allow totally unregulated migration of Etonians to and fro across the country.

The last thing that we wish to do is to suggest that an Etonian is in himself worse than any other schoolboy. It is by no fault of his that he is an Etonian. Any suggestion of inferiority would be an illiberal suggestion, smacking of prejudice. Nor is it the individual Etonian who creates the problem. The problem is the problem of numbers. It only becomes acute when Etonians insist, as unfortunately they do, on herding together in one particular area. They live there in houses, many of which are old and insanitary and some of which contain thirty or as many as forty boys each, in conditions of gross overcrowding such as would not be tolerated in any housing estate that was subject to public control. Their numbers are growing fast. We do not say that their way of life is inferior to that of the ordinary Englishman. To make such a suggestion would be narrow-minded, but it is—we must face it—different. The Etonian has not got the ordinary Englishman's liking for quiet. The citizen of Eton or of Windsor likes

on a summer evening to stroll tranquilly along the river's side or to take his ease upon the water. Is it altogether surprising that he should complain if he finds the towing path jammed with a shouting mass of excited schoolboys, encouraging with frantic cries their fellows who are rowing against one another in some race? Can he be blamed if he finds such excitement not altogether English? One has only to walk through the streets of Eton at night and it is possible to hear through the open windows a noise that is sometimes almost deafening of shouting and raucous laughter. There are those among the so-called scholars who occupy themselves by playing in a jazz band, while—even worse—among the larger boys are to be found, sometimes, pockets of Greek-speaking and Latin-speaking pupils who seem to make little effort to assimilate themselves to the general customs of the land in which they live.

It is of course true that in a civilized society persons of widely different social origins must learn to live amicably together. There is need for tolerance on both sides and we are well aware that each has much to learn from the other. We have nothing but praise for the admirable enterprise of those public-spirited citizens who have attempted to make friends of the Etonian, to invite him into their houses and to try to

integrate him into the British way of life. But in spite of all such efforts there remains the great intractable problem—the problem of intermarriage. As a general rule of course the Etonian will always prefer to marry the sister of a fellow Etonian. Beyond question the repugnance of the Etonian to the notion of intermarriage is in general every bit as strong as the repugnance of the non-Etonian. But it is idle to shut our eyes to it that, if totally free social intercourse between Etonian and non-Etonian is permitted, mixed marriages will inevitably from time to time occur. Is society prepared for that? It is not sufficient to dismiss the problem with sonorous generalities. Each one of us must face it as a real and personal problem and ask himself: Would you be prepared for your sister to marry an Etonian?

As Mr. Justice Pumpkin so truly said, every boy has a right to walk freely about the streets of this land, whatever the colour of his tie, and it is indeed far best that this difficult problem should be settled by agreement between the Government and the authorities of the school rather than by unilateral administrative action. There is, happily, good reason to think that such a solution may be found. We would not ask that the Government should close down the school, but it cannot be to the interest of the school any more than it is to that of society at large that its numbers be wholly unregulated. No news could be more welcome than the news that the headmaster had of his own volition decided to expel some four or five hundred of the boys, thus reducing the problem of flogging the rest to one of manageable proportions. Such a measure, if taken by the school authorities themselves, could not fairly be represented as a measure of discrimination. The open-barred prison may have its contribution to make to the solution of the problems of penal reform, but no one is a worse friend to such reforms than he who advocates its too rapid or too indiscriminate adoption.

☆

"The latest joke at Cocoa is that I.C.B.M. instead of standing for Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile actually stands for Into the Banana River."

Don Iddon in the World's Press News

Subtle, too.





Concluding the Survey of the States by the man who never got there.

12

AND SO FAREWELL

ON my way back to England I called in at the White House.

It was an informal visit—they were not even expecting me, as it turned out—but they very civilly offered to show me around, and it didn't cost me a cent. "I just happened to be passing," I said. "Please don't put yourselves out on my account." "Not at all," they said: "there are several other people here." While I was inspecting a four-pedestal Hepplewhite table in the dining-room, in company with two honeymoon couples and an outing of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, from Detroit, it occurred to me that I would probably have to give several days' notice before I could expect to do this kind of thing in Buckingham Palace, or even in Number Ten. The White House has a façade which reminded me very strongly of the Duke of Leinster's house in Dublin, and its history has not been without incident, as the following chronology will show:

- 1792. Cornerstone laid.
- 1800. The President's wife (a Mrs. Adams) hangs her washing in the East Room.
- 1814. The British do their best to burn down the whole building, after a portrait of Washington and other relics have been carefully removed and handed over

to a Mrs. Madison (the President's wife).

- 1814. Madison moves to a house at 18th Street and New York Ave.
- 1817. Building restored, and painted white to hide the burns.
- 1935 (approx.). Lady secretary sees the ghost of Abraham Lincoln sitting on the edge of a bed pulling on his boots.
- 1947. Second floor porch added to south portico.
- 1948. One leg of a grand piano is observed to be projecting through the ceiling of the State Dining-room while the President's daughter (a Miss Truman) is upstairs getting in a bit of practice.*
- 1948. Her father, who has suspected for some time that the house is on the point of falling to bits, tells Congress to fit a new interior at a cost of five and a half million dollars, and hot-foots it down the street to live at 1651, Pennsylvania Ave.

The White House, of course, is in Washington, the capital, which is in the District of Columbia, which is where part of Maryland used to be on the north side of the Potomac, except for a portion on the opposite bank, which is where part of Virginia used to be. As if that weren't enough, the city, I was solemnly informed, is co-extensive with the District of Columbia, which may therefore be regarded as being largely mythical, and the maximum speed is 25 m.p.h.

Washington was laid out according to some rather fanciful designs dreamed up by a Major L'Enfant, an engineer who came over with Lafayette and

* She was pretty powerful in the left hand.

distinguished himself during the planning of the city by demolishing a new manor house belonging to a wealthy landowner, who had refused to move it when told it would obstruct a vista. Washington is thick with vistas, and has more trees than any other city in the etc., etc. It is pleasant enough, but tends to be pervaded by a smell of red tape and sealing-wax. It is populated chiefly by Civil Servants, official guides, postcard-sellers, and people connected with Security.

"If you should have occasion to telephone me," whispered a friend whose name I have since written on rice-paper and eaten, "don't for heaven's sake say anything vital, because everybody's wires are tapped, and the tappers' wires are counter-tapped, and brother is divided against brother, and there are men all over the place with powerful telescopes who can lip-read."

"Pull yourself together," I replied sharply. "Take off that mask at once, and stop your melodramatic nonsense. This is a public restaurant."

All the same, I'm bound to admit that as we rose to leave I distinctly heard the rustle of a shorthand notebook under the table: and half an hour later, when I slipped away from the main body during a guided tour of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the Department of Justice Building (free), and wrenched open a steel filing cabinet labelled *Agents, Known, Red, Foreign-Born, with Characteristics, Distinguishing, and Operation, Mode of*, several uniformed guards moved me on quite

openly, frowning. But there it is: the Americans are extraordinarily touchy about such matters.

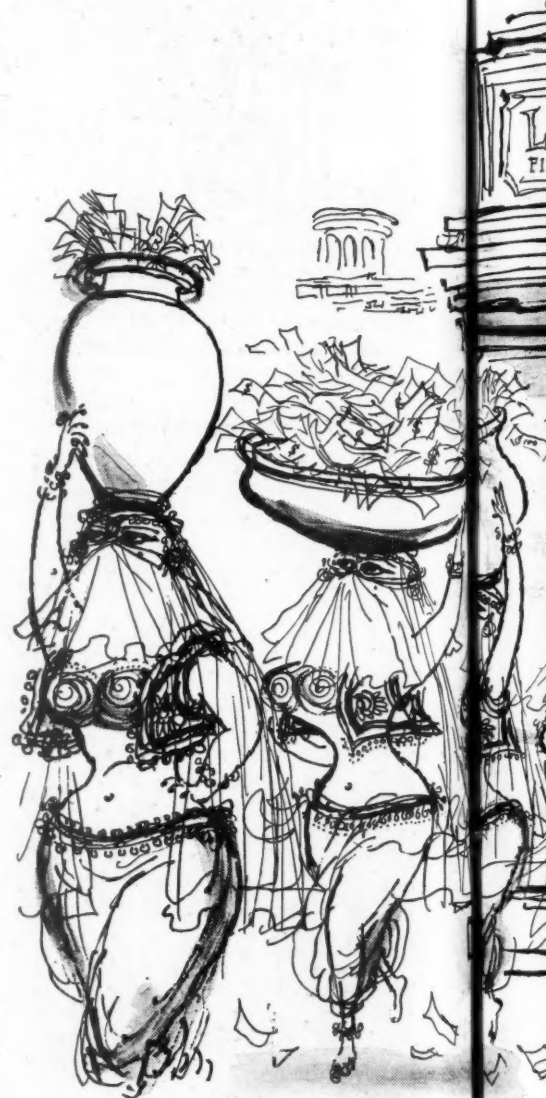
People come to Washington from all parts of the country, for all kinds of reasons. I stopped a good many of them in the street and questioned them closely. One had travelled fifteen hundred miles to complain to his Senator about a leaking roof. Another had just arrived from Idaho to see the arboretum in the Vanderbilt Mansion, and was greatly incensed when I told him it is in New York City, not far from Hyde Park. ("Well, I'll be gosh-darned," he said.) A man with a brown paper parcel told me he was going over to Herb's place to whoop it up a little. Eight different people said they were here partly on vacation and partly to check up on the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the Andrew Mellon Collection, the first draft of the Gettysburg Address, the Gutenberg Bible, and the "Kitty Hawk." ("I visit them each and every year," one lady said, adjusting her scarf and speaking very distinctly. "In that way I renew my links with our glorious heritage and feel at one with the heroes of our past. Are we on the air at this very moment? Because if so I would like to say Hello to all at 174a Ojibway Drive, Ypsilanti, Michigan.") A grave, fattish person with a string tie and a black Stetson said he was on his way to the Senate Chamber, where he proposed to stand up in the public gallery and shower the members of Congress with privately printed leaflets urging the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Haiti and an immediate reduction in the price of a monthly season ticket between Hoboken and Jersey City.

I left him on the steps of the Capitol, and wished him luck. The Capitol covers an area of three and a half acres, is situated at latitude 38° 53' 22.9" north and longitude 77° 00' 33.7" west from Greenwich, and is surmounted by a Statue of Freedom designed by F. Marion Crawford's father. A good deal of the routine work of governing the United States is carried on in these marble halls, and the country also has many conveniently situated golf courses. I asked the man on the door to give me a brief outline of the political system, and he explained that there are two parties—the Republicans, who stand for prosperity, peace, and a gradual

emergence from the chaos left by the New Deal, and the Democrats (or "those other bastards," as he put it), who stand for peace, prosperity, and a gradual emergence from the chaos left by President Hoover. It is open to any citizen aged thirty-five or upwards to become President, at a compensation of \$100,000 a year, plus taxable expenses of \$50,000, plus \$40,000 for travelling and entertainment. The President's chief functions are to foster public relations by calling political correspondents by their first names at press conferences, and to decode or elucidate, for the benefit of the world at large, the policy speeches of his Secretary of State. It is a difficult job, and every four years the country is overrun with people declaring at the tops of their voices that they have not the slightest intention of standing for President. This is called campaigning.

While I was taking a sight-seeing stroll through the wide, airy streets of Washington, hearing the pulse-beats at the very heart of this diverse, rapidly-developing country, I began to feel already some of the pangs that were to grip me a week later, when I leaned over the rail of the promenade deck and watched the huts of the Brooklyn peasants fade gradually into the distance, merging at last with the horizon on the starboard side as I went below to make sure I'd packed those two towels from the Mayflower Hotel, Los Angeles. A feeling of nostalgia swept over me, misting my eyes as I stood bare-headed before the colossal statue of Lincoln (seated) in the Lincoln Memorial. "Well, friend," I seemed to hear the old man sternly say, "take home a good report. It is only through an accident of birth, remember, that you are not one of us: therefore do not reproach either yourself or us. And now move on and put away that hanky, for you're holding up the queue."

I saw the old Ford Theatre, where Lincoln was shot while watching *Our American Cousin*, and the house in which he died, which covers an area of .05 acres at 516 10th Street. I saw statues of Jefferson, Grant and Jackson, and learned that one statue of Grant is half an inch shorter than the statue of Victor Emmanuel in Rome. (I was able to find nobody who could account for this, although one elderly lady with a parasol suggested that Grant, a very cussed



man, may have upset the arrangements by having his hair cut the day before the sculptor did his head.) I went up the Washington Monument in a lift (10c.) for a breath-taking view of the city and the Virginia hills, and came down by the stairs (free). I saw seven and a half million books in the Library



of Congress, and a hundred-ton bronze reproduction of a photograph of the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima. I trotted through the Pentagon, which covers thirty-four acres, not counting sixty-nine acres for parking, and has a daytime population of twenty thousand, seventeen and a half miles of corridors, a

ticket agency, a bank, a dental clinic, and a weekly consumption of forty thousand soft drinks. Exhausted at last, I collapsed on to a seat in The Mall, and presently a representative came and sat beside me to ask my opinion of the first forty-five minutes of a filibuster he was preparing. "I'll stop 'em shipping

small-arms and bubble-gum to those uncommitted hotheads in the Middle East," he said, "if I have to read 'em *The Brothers Karamazov* backwards!" "I'm afraid I know very little about politics," I said when I had heard him through, "but if I may hazard a suggestion, it seems to me that the whole

thing would be vastly improved if you accompanied yourself throughout on the ukulele."

His eyes lit up at once, and I am proud to think that as I sat there with him under the old shade trees, my American journey drawing to its close, I may have made my own small contribution to his nation's history.

It was the least I could do, for I had been shown much kindness in the U.S.A.,* and seen great marvels. Later, in fact, as the mooring-ropes were cast off from our great ship, and the humble dock-workers joined hands on the quayside to sing their strange, haunting song of farewell, I realized that I had left out much from my record. Try as one will, some fleeting moments, seemingly unforgettable at the time, will inevitably elude one's pen in the rush of composition: and many of them came back to me then, while the fire-boats

* On the comparatively few occasions when I was actually knocked down there were extenuating circumstances, such as bad light or an unfamiliarity with the language.

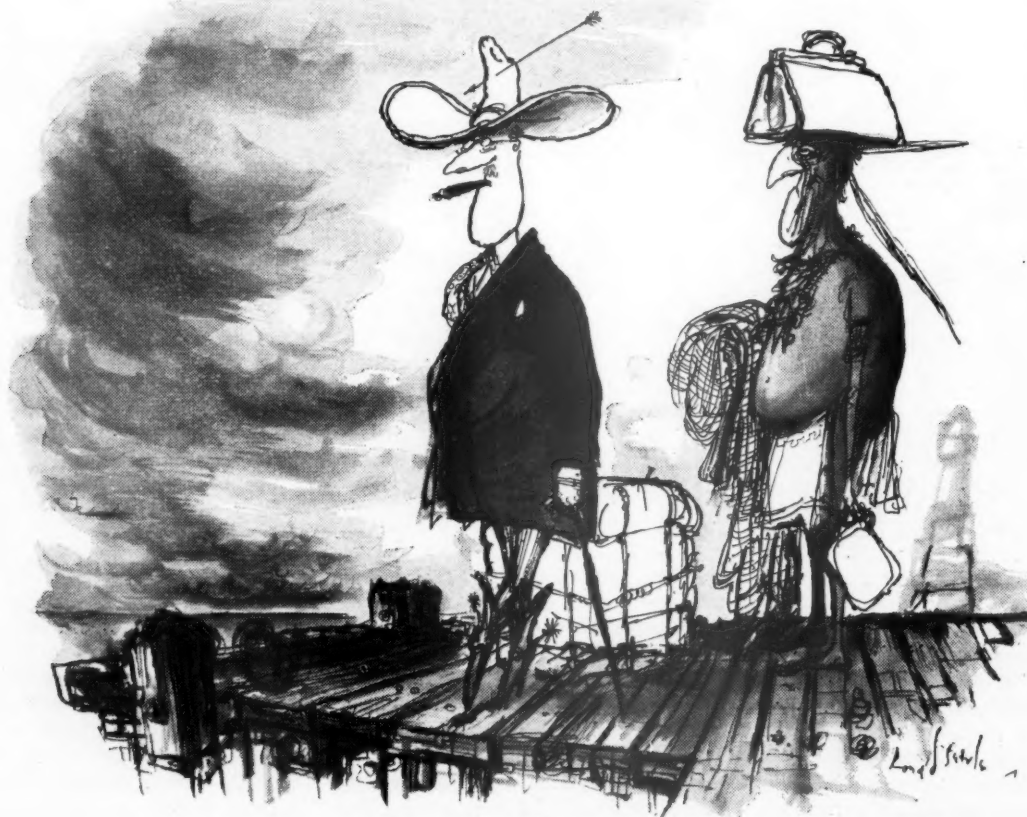
squirted me with water in the time-honoured way, and we nosed out of New York harbour into the grey wastes of the Atlantic. I smelt again the yellow jessamine fragrant on the evening air in Charleston, South Carolina, and the meat-packing plant at Orangeburg. I heard again the happy laughter on the campus of the University of Arkansas, where girls *and* boys receive education at one and the same time. I recalled the wise old man I met on the beach at Ocean City, Maryland. "Son," he said, gazing out across the calm waters of Sinepuxent Bay, "a country that has invented the cash register and the bifocal lens, the submarine and barbed wire, the Mason jar and the lawnmower, the bottle-machine and the paper collar, safety pins and lightning rods, evaporated milk and the split-phase induction motor, is going to find an answer to it all *one* of these days, you see if it don't." I remembered lazy days spent fishing on the Wabash, while the Hoosiers herded hogs along the valley.

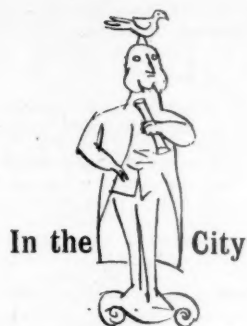
Once more I roamed the rolling prairies of Iowa, rode the ranges of Western Nebraska with a bunch of daredevil cowboys and a certain Mrs. Olifant. Ah!—the Elk's Rodeo at Broken Bow! Shall I, in some blazing August of the future, come back and guess the weight of that same cake, hear the thud of those pounding hooves, the fiddle's plaintive notes beneath the moon, the secret gurgle of the apple-jack . . . ?

Only in dreams, I fear. It is not wise to return. Things change. What once was real and final can never be the same, will never be recaptured.

I stood at the rail and looked out over the restless, darkening ocean, until the pointing finger of the Statue of Liberty had sunk below the horizon, and America was once again a mystery, over the sea. "O Captain! my Captain!" I murmured with Walt Whitman, as I made my way back to my cabin—"O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done."

THE END





A Happy Banking Year

THIS is the time of year when we tend to become more bank-conscious than at others. The movement of cash across the counters will soon be reaching its seasonal chinking, rustling peak, and this year will probably set up another record note circulation. Within the next week or so the windows of bank offices throughout the land will start to glitter late into the evening as the staffs battle with the task of closing the books, calculating the interest and preparing the accounts for the last day of the year.

The bank accounts that will be published in the New Year should be satisfactory. It will be very surprising if any bank on December 31 continues to show the deficit on its investments which has slightly spoiled the look of so many balance sheets over the past nine years or so. The crack in gilt-edged prices which followed the devaluation of sterling forced a number of banks to adopt the perfectly justifiable practice of showing their investments at prices higher than the prevailing market values. It was, and is, justifiable because these investments are redeemable within ten years and must, therefore rise to par in that period. Over the past few years these deficits have been gradually worked off and the next batch of balance sheets should show all the banks in the white sheet of complete orthodox regularity, without those small footnotes drawing the attention to the gap between market and balance-sheet values.

Bank profits can usually be counted upon to be high in periods of comparatively dear money—which 1958 unquestionably has been. The important thing about 1958, however, is that it was a period of declining rates. It started off with Bank Rate at 7 and is likely to end with the rate at 4 per cent. Some optimists are even now hoping for 3½, if not at the year's end then early in 1959. Banks and discount houses are happy when sliding on the downward

side of the interest curve. That is because while the rates paid out on deposits come down automatically with Bank Rate, the rates which they earn on certain important assets (bills and short-dated Government bonds for example) are fixed from the moment at which the banks acquire them. When interest rates are falling this means a widening of the margin of profit, just as the margin narrows when the drift of interest rates is upward.

Another reason for expecting fairly good profit figures is that the success with which the banks have escaped bad and doubtful losses since the end of the war has persisted. There have, it is true, been some larger losses of cash through bandit activity, but in the context of banking figures these are minute.

Add to all this the first modest returns from personal loan accounts and the promise of satisfactory yields on the banks' hire purchase investments, and

most of the ingredients are there to make the coming chorus of bank chairmen's speeches a fairly cheerful noise. Let us mention three. From Lord Monckton, whose Midland Bank now once again heads the deposits league table, we can surely expect some reference to the popularization of banking, in which his institution has played such a pioneer role. With the accounts of Barclays Bank, which has been nudging and on occasion passing the Midland for first place, Mr. Anthony Tuke can be expected to deliver his usual homily with vigour and Wykehamist eloquence and learning. Sir Oliver Franks, chairman of Lloyds Bank, will still be precluded by his membership of the Radcliffe Committee from dealing too intimately with affairs of domestic credit policy; but in the external field, and particularly in the buoyancy of sterling, he will find many themes on which to embroider cheerful variations.

LOMBARD LANE

* * *



In the Country

The Kale Problem

GOODNESS knows where the attraction lies, but the dank, dark depths of a kale field invariably contain a greater density of wild life than any other piece of vegetation I know. "Must be like Piccadilly in the black-out," someone remarked the other day as we watched the eviction of pheasants, rabbits, field mice, a weasel, a hare, and various birds of song. It was caused by our local pack of foxhounds whose heads were bobbing up and down above leaf level like a school of porpoises at sea. Kale is a favourite draw for them.

From a shooting point of view it presents two problems which have baffled our syndicate for years. The first is how to keep the beaters in line, the second how to get the birds to fly. Many of the blighters just laugh at the sight of our sodden legs toiling past them and refuse to budge unless actually trodden on. And even when they do

fly, nine times out of ten they break back, craftily leaving one or two straggling beaters between them and the guns.

The answer, it seemed, was to have our own pack of hounds, and last year everyone was asked to bring as many working dogs as he could muster. Our ill-assorted pack got the birds to fly all right, but seldom in the right direction, and invariably some member of it forestalled our later movements. As we headed for Paisley Wood we would hear the distant "cock-cockings" of departing pheasants.

This year we tried linking the beaters by a rope, with pickets dangling from it to cover the gaps—an idea of Symonds, our keeper. At first they carried it along by hand, but among mutinous mutterings about flipping chain gangs there were some genuine complaints of the strain on the hands. Symonds therefore decided that they should be roped round the waist like mountaineers.

Although the roping-up was an intricate business, this method seemed the best we could find. And so it might have remained if an old cock bird had not got up at Fosterwell's feet and flown off down the line. No one who knows Fosterwell could blame the end beater for flinging himself flat—and it was sheer bad luck that the one next him should have had his eye on something else. The beaters' remarks as they picked themselves up made it quite plain that we had not yet solved the kale problem.

GREGORY BLAXLAND

Toby Competitions

No. 47—S.O.S.

COMPETITORS are invited to draft a section of a first aid manual relating to treatment for one of the following: (a) Petrification following sight of Gorgon; (b) Conversion by jealous god into tree; (c) Fever induced by thought of sea; (d) Chill following exposure to ghost stories. *Limit 100 words.*

A prize consisting of a framed *Punch* original, to be selected from all available drawings, is offered for the best entry. Runners-up will receive book tokens to the value of one guinea. Entries (any number but each on a separate piece of paper and accompanied by a separate entry token, cut out from the bottom left-hand corner of this page) by first post on **Tuesday, December 30**, to TOBY COMPETITION No. 47, *Punch*, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4. The entry date has been extended to allow for Christmas postal delays.

Report on Competition No. 44 (Eye-Catcher)

Competitors were asked to provide an opening of a play that would catch a producer's eye. A high standard of knowledge of, and disrespect for, the contemporary drama was shown. Several competitors showed a light-hearted lunacy that made their efforts entertaining but raised a suspicion that producers who turned to Act III would

have found that they had not kept it up. Some entries were short, "black-out" sketches rather than openings; but the general level was high, whether serious or farcical. The winner:

J. C. MCBRIDE
12 CAMPDEN HILL GARDENS
LONDON, W.8

was serious and, like the author of *The Trojan Women*, wrote a beginning that might have been an ending.

I LIVE IN BELGRAVE SQUARE

SCENE: A ground floor room in Belgrave Square. One window is covered with heavy lead sheeting. The other has been blown in, allowing the audience a view of the deserted square similar to Passchendaele, 1915. A geiger counter clicks monotonously on the Adam chimney-piece. Amid the dust and broken glass can be discerned the ruins of a Louis XV commode, a gilt Chippendale mirror and other products of the Age of Reason.

When the curtain rises MARY is seen kneeling, cooking over a spirit stove. She is quite young, but hairless, and very pale. A photographic negative is pinned to her ragged dress.

Enter ROBERT through a hole in the wall. He is also bald.

ROBERT (excitedly): Mary! Mary! It's over! They've surrendered! MARY makes no answer or movement

ROBERT: Don't you understand? We've won!

There is still no answer. In the distance two cracked church bells start to ring.

Among the commended entries were:
A stage furnished only with a sofa. A YOUNG MAN in dirty clothes at window.

Casually he walks across the room, opens door R. and looks in. A scream. He slowly closes the door and returns to window. The same door opens and a GIRL creeps silently across behind him.

GIRL: None of this would have happened if Mother hadn't put her hand on that man's knee during dinner.

BOY: And worse, right in the middle of his hors d'œuvres. Anyhow, one can't blame Mother entirely . . . not after Rajputana.

GIRL: I suppose not. (The GIRL returns to door R. and turns.) It's the milk, you know, Roger. It will melt!

BOY: Ssh! Listen! She's arrived.

(MOTHER sneeps in door REAR, wearing her Coronation gown of pink and mauve brocade, crowned by an enormous tiara.)

MOTHER: Oh, these Salvation Army committee meetings! (Pause.) Is something wrong?

BOY: Yes.

McKenzie Ian Dow, 62 Mid Stocket Road, Aberdeen, Scotland

ADONIS AND THE AFTERMATH

The action of the play takes place in a Launderette at Stoke Newington. Two HOUSEWIVES are discovered staring at their appropriate portholes.

1ST HOUSEWIFE:

What do you see as the water surges, Splashes, streaks on the foaming glass?

2ND HOUSEWIFE:

All Man's sins and troubles undressed, Eternal Mondays canned and compressed, As the red flannel drips.

(1ST HOUSEWIFE takes revolver from bag, aims at glass and fires.)

1ST HOUSEWIFE: It stops.

2ND HOUSEWIFE: It stops.

1ST HOUSEWIFE:

Shirts, shorts, pyjamas, Three pairs of panties and a bra— Stationary, immobile as if the life had gone that never was, And rotation were a dream.

2ND HOUSEWIFE: It was the pillow case that cried out!

1ST HOUSEWIFE: Of course.

See how its viscous, frothy white blood Seeps across the floor.

Here is the smell of death and wet wool. (Rises, brandishing revolver and walks towards door.)

Talking of dirty washing, Now for Lord Wolfenden. [Exit

David Shepherd, 211 South Norwood Hill, S. E. 25

These earn book-tokens, as well as:

Campbell Allen, 12 Glebe Road, N. 3; M. Hutchins, 34 Wilton Road, Salisbury, Wilts.; Elizabeth Ostler, 39 Warwick Avenue, Coventry; A. D. Wilson, c/o National Provincial Bank, Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1; Andrew B. King, 23 Douglas Road, Hazel Grove, Cheshire; M. Kimmins, Hillside, East Malling, Maidstone, Kent

☆

"I hadn't seen my family for seven years, but the moment I arrived back in Africa I took a hotel room under an assumed name.

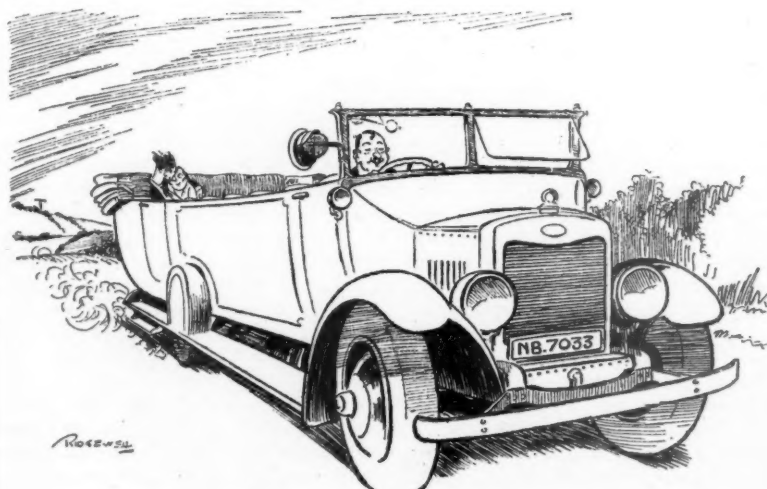
"Then I hired a car, took a gun, and drove out into the northern veld. I spent two weeks there alone with the animals. Then, only then, I felt that I could see my mother."

Sunday Dispatch

Through the sights, you mean?

CHESTNUT GROVE

Ridgwell (*Punch*, 1920-1937): this particular drawing is selected for the nostalgic "period" look of the charabanc.



THE DRIVER WHO PLAYED THE GAME.

April 2 1930

Essence of Parliament



THE winter wind was blowing and a number of gentlemen were giving an impromptu concert outside St. Stephen's entrance to prove that musical instruments ought not to pay purchase tax. Inside, in spite of Mr. Macmillan on Cyprus and Mr. Watkinson on railways and Colonel Wigg's denunciation of yahoos at Westminster and houghnms at Didcot, the week has been almost entirely dominated by the Foreign Office's very successful attempt to blow up Mr. Randolph Churchill to more than life size. What was the object of the Foreign Office in this exercise it would be indeed hard to guess. It is of course unprecedented that after such an episode as Suez the Government should not have issued a White Paper, but we all understand why in the circumstances they did not do so. We all understand that so much would have come out in the wash that it was from their point of view better not to have a wash at all.

Mr. Macmillan said that these matters had often been debated before, but he omitted to say that every time that they were debated Ministers gave a different version of the events. But what is extraordinary is not so much that the Government did not issue a White Paper as that the Opposition never seriously pressed them to issue one, and in so far as Mr. Macmillan could gibe at the Socialists that they never seemed to have thought of this one until, rather late in the day, Mr. Churchill put the idea into their heads, it was an effective gibe. But what the Prime Minister totally failed to explain was why, if the Government was not prepared to state its case, it should wish to advertise Mr. Churchill's articles by condemning them for inaccuracy and then refusing to say where it was that they were inaccurate. Mr. Churchill may have made

some incidental slips. But in general, as Mr. Gaitskell truly said, all that Mr. Churchill has done has been to put into print what everybody for a couple of years has known to be the outline of the story. It was idle to make a point of it that Mr. Churchill's account was not an official account, for no one ever supposed that it was. The important point—the point which the Government, having made its comment, must substantiate—was that according to their claim it was inaccurate.

Mr. Macmillan is a very able man and there is nothing that he enjoys more than making a fool of other people. He does not so much enjoy making a fool of himself, and in this indeed he is not unique; and, whatever other journalists may have reported, it was certainly my impression that he was well aware that he was making a fool of himself on Tuesday. He tried to divert attention by some cryptic hints about the election, but the election, whatever its result, can only be accepted as a verdict upon Suez if the public are first informed of the facts of Suez. He astutely shifted fire from

fact that Mr. Emrys Hughes was unshaken and that Mr. Macmillan was quite unable to answer his point. Sir Winston sat opposite to him in his customary pose, expressionless face and with hands firmly placed upon his knees, and it would be fascinating to know what he thought of this most unexpected of all champions of the Churchillian way of life.

Mr. Emrys Hughes stuck to one perfectly simple and unanswerable point—that you have no right to call a man a liar if you are not prepared to specify what are his lies. He made his point on Tuesday at question-time, and then when on Wednesday the unexpectedly early

conclusion of the day's business gave him an opportunity, he seized it and raked the whole matter over again on the adjournment. The Government, unprepared for this, did not even have a Minister on the Front Bench, as is the general custom, to listen to what was being said. For that reason it fell by an odd chance to anti-Suez Mr. Nigel Nicolson, the only Conservative in the House, to make the answer to Mr. Emrys Hughes' attack. Mr. Nicolson's answer was that no good and no final agreement could come out of a public inquiry now. He may well be right, but if the Government is not going to tell the facts then it should not hint at them, and it should have preserved a dignified silence about Mr. Churchill's articles.

As so often, it has been left to Mr. Butler to make the week's gnomic comment. "Never," said Mr. Butler, "has there been a time where clear, determined leadership was more important, and that is what we propose to give you." Mr. Butler is the Betjeman of politics, and no one can ever tell when he is being serious and when he is being funny.

PERCY SOMERSET



Mr. R. A. Butler



Mr. Emrys Hughes

the more formidable Mr. Emrys Hughes to his less formidable leaders on the Front Bench on the other side of the gangway, and there of course, as was only to be expected, he soon had Socialist Privy Councillors doing his job for him. "Can't we get a word in edgewise?" shouted Mr. Shinwell in exasperation when Mr. Bevan was called before him. "Let the dog see the rabbit," enigmatically replied Mr. Bevan over his shoulder; but who was the dog and who was the rabbit was far from clear. But none of this concealed the

FOR
WOMEN

Dix Shopping Days to Noël

IF someone had told me I'd want to be a cross between Norah Docker, Cræsus and Fort Knox I should have been surprised. But there it is. Paris does something to me. Especially when there are only dix shopping days to Noël.

Well, is it surprising? The hula hoops are whirling outside the Grands Magasins du Louvre; the inhabitants of the moon (bearing a strange resemblance to Monsieur Michelin) are dancing in one of the windows to lunar tunes. Chestnuts are a-crackle in street braziers. *Le Père Noël est évidemment en route.* In the Avenue de l'Opéra there's a toy-shop where the dolls wear sunglasses in August; now they are sold complete with change of wig (brunette and Bardot blonde), and rollers for their miniature home perms. And in the Palais Royal there's a man who makes model soldiers for you while you wait: anything from Charlemagne to a Raffet grognard. You can no doubt buy a model of de Gaulle.



Yes, the children are happy. But Paris is, above all, a woman's city. *Ces magasins sont à vous, mesdames.* Here, in the Rue de la Paix, are harlequin umbrellas: peacock, marron, pink, with tiny golden tendrils to hold them shut. *Ces magasins sont à vous, mesdames.* Here are Thumbelina's shoes, apricot, plum, viridian, with toes upcurled like the roofs of pagodas. Here are Cinderella's slippers: invisible for huge paste buckles and bows. Here is scent in crystal stars. At Schiaparelli's, in the Place Vendôme, you will find crystal candlesticks of scent, cased in snuffers of midnight blue. For the lady who likes a lamp (and, *mon Dieu*, the Parisian lamps!) there are Chinese vases with jade green shades, ormolu pineapples with jet, and Bohemian bottles enhanced (one can hardly say shaded) with gold and Bohemian ruby. Oh, the bottles! Here is a tantalus of decanters from Murano: strange, elongated, as if they had been designed by Modigliani. One is striped Oxford and Cambridge,

another, with crimson base, looks like a half-finished bottle of burgundy. And for those who prefer their bottles full there is a hamper at Courcellet's that would be the envy of Brillat-Savarin: champagne (two kinds), pink wine from Portugal, port, foie gras, crystallized fruit, and a small sack of marrons glacés.

How charming to buy that thirteenth-century château in Périgord, or to give the man of the moment that *gentil-homme* près Pontoise! How pleasant to furnish a room or two with swan-armed Empire chairs, upholstered in buttercup gold, from one of those *antiquaires* along the *quais*! How engaging even to buy a collar and paw-warmer for Aunt Eliza's dog from the *toiletterie pour chiens* at la Samaritaine! How divine to receive a luncheon voucher (renewable every Christmas) for that little restaurant in the Boulevard Saint-Germain!

Ah well, *ces magasins sont à vous, mesdames.* At least I've managed to bring back a packet of Gaulois. Now I'll do my Christmas shopping in Oxford Street.

JOANNA RICHARDSON

School Train

NO, not the seventeenth. I'm terribly sorry. No, dear, it's nothing serious. I'm not going into hospital. No, not wisdom teeth. I've got to meet The Train. The School Train. Rosemary. You see, she's breaking up.

No, dear, the sixteenth's no good, either. I have to have my hair set. And a manicure. I must make a good impression on Miss Cavendish. The headmistress. No, of course she won't

recognize me. But Rosemary said don't have your hair all straggly this time, and please don't wear the blue hat with that coat. Miss Cavendish is smart. She's particular about clothes. She even notices your fingernails.

If I meet Miss Garrick (intermediate French) I'm not to ask how Rosemary's getting on; but if I meet Miss Johnson, I can mention lacrosse. I mustn't say I hope Gillian comes to tea, because Gillian isn't one of the Big Six any more, but I must tell Caroline I hope

she'll come (I hope she doesn't: her people Dress for Dinner). I mustn't park the car too near Victoria, because it's rather shabby. I've got to bring the corgi, but wash him first. I mustn't notice that Primula has sticking-out teeth with a band on, and I must treat her with respect, as she's a prefect. I mustn't call her Haggis any more.

So there you are, dear, it was sweet of you to ask me. But I'll be *hors de combat* for the hols.

CAROLE PAINE

That Cat Has Everything

NOW she's dressed up as Father Christmas! Not content with getting all the best presents, now that long-legged, black-haired, retroussé-nosed, doe-eyed beauty in the advertisements is going to be a Top Giver too.

Ever since she stepped off the drawing board she has been carrying off all the luxury goods and latest cars. It used to be all the film stars who couldn't do without—but now it's her with her surprised eyebrows. Though how she can keep up the surprise beats me; she must know by now that her adoring husband will rush to give her every luxurious or labour-saving article as soon as it appears on the market.

It all started one Christmas when her family blindfolded her and presented her with a giant-sized refrigerator, and presumably a giant-sized housekeeping allowance to keep it stocked. Since then she has gone from strength to strength. She laughs at wash-day, and more clothes, sheets and towels than the rest of us can ever hope to possess are loaded into her washing machine, fully automatic, of course, and then piled into the electric drier to "tumble" dry, while her child gazes significantly at the rain which is soaking our tattered garments.

Although she looks far too young and elegant to be married at all, she appears with as many as three children, depending on the occasion. It takes one muddy schoolboy to show how little she cares for dirty floors, one pig-tailed moppet to romp in nylon, but two to rifle that well-stocked refrigerator and three to mouth-water around the new electric cooker. However, when she settles down, surrounded by handsome admirers, for her s-m-o-o-t-h cocktail and her expensive cigarette, no children are to be seen. This clearly indicates the possession of a well-trained nanny. Why not? She's got everything else. Of one thing we may rest assured, her family, whatever its number, are fed on nothing but vitamin-enriched, made-in-a-moment, just-add-water-and-bake foods, untouched by hand but well beaten in her electric mixer.

And her clothes! Gossamer spun, no-iron nylon lingerie and stockings of all the best brands bedeck her perfect figure. True she only appears in dresses and coats from the biggest

wholesalers, but why worry about couturiers when she has a new outfit with every issue of the women's magazines?

There must be some misfortunes in her life, and it can't be fun to receive *nothing* but steam irons and vacuum-cleaners for Christmas, but the only tragedy that meets the public eye is that of tripping over the cat, a seal-point Siamese naturally, and spilling her pan of sausages, but never mind, those plastic tiles will soon wipe clean.

Dear dark beauty, how I envy and admire you—but just wait till I meet the man who draws you.

ANNE HAWARD

☆

At the Costumier's

I KNOW it's the second time you've brought it back, madam, but I'm afraid I can't answer for the zip breaking out. You say you *haven't* put on weight? Well, it probably *was* too tight on the waist; if you breathe in too hard at the fitting, that's what happens, of course. You're not the only one, you know—you'd be surprised how many clients pretend to be Bartoks when

they've got a tape measure round their middles. I'll put a new one in, by all means, but it's bound to break out again. No, we can't do *that*—there's nothing to let out, you see . . . well, you only gave me the bare yard and a half, didn't you? I'll do what I can, but it will be a few weeks. I know it's only a small thing, but I've a ball gown to finish for Mrs. Freeman, a theatre coat for Miss Grey and three cocktail dresses for Mrs. Lisle . . .

Oh, this is your material for the afternoon dress, is it? I see . . . And this is the pattern . . . well, it's more of a house frock, really, isn't it? Yes, a pretty colour—it was all the rage last season—but I wonder if the material isn't going to seat a bit, especially with the style of skirt you've chosen. Still, it's what you want, and that's the most important thing. Let's just pin it on and see, now . . . and, madam, try to stand the way you always do, just slump a little . . .

CHES GUDENIAN

☆

"I put my arm round her and held her face against mine so that she would not say anything more about it."—A magazine story
Why not put the light out?





BOOKING OFFICE

The Swan of Wantage

John Betjeman's Collected Poems. Compiled with an Introduction by the Earl of Birkenhead. Murray, 15/-

IMPRESSIONS shower down on the reader of this volume, among them—perhaps the most overwhelming—that of the personality of the poet. We feel ourselves in the presence of a man of strong will; indeed, a man of iron. Nowadays, the term "Betjemanesque" may be found even in letters to the daily papers (usually employed to deprecate those who delight in good architectural design in contrast with an urge for concrete lampposts), but it was quite another matter to write verse like Mr. Betjeman's when he was known only to a comparatively small circle thirty years ago. That needed a forceful personality.

Poetry was then, generally speaking, at the point of being wrested from the shell-shocked hands of the post-Georgian war-poets by those younger bards, some of whom were playfully designated by Mr. Jocelyn Brooke, in one of his examinations of the verse of those days, the Homo-Communists. The interesting thing is that all those kestrels and pylons of the early 'thirties have, in their way, dated more distinctly than Betjeman's pitch-pine and stucco. Crashing his way through the *zeitgeist* to the swelling notes of the church harmonium, John Betjeman has become, perhaps, the poet through whom the vagaries of our age will in the last resort be remembered.

Mr. Betjeman's work is in the best sense traditional. Although superficially concerned with apparently trivial matters of behaviour and decoration, he thinks ceaselessly of Death; and to a somewhat lesser degree of Love—ever threatened in his eyes by Lust. It is scarcely necessary to add that he is also the great poet of the Anglican Church. The continuity of these fundamental preoccupations is remarkable. They

are with him, here, from the first to the last page.

Obviously influenced by the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, and by Scott and Tennyson, these poems also show less expected affiliations. For example, we are reminded (perhaps deliberately) of Kipling by lines like:

*"From Summerfields to Lynam's the
thirsty tarmac dries"*

or the sonorities of:

*"Is God who prepared His coming
With fruit of the earth for his food
With stone for building his churches
And trees for making his rood";*

NOVEL FACES—XLVII



STELLA GIBBONS

Miss Gibbons has imagined many a
pleasantry
Since first "Cold Comfort Farm" exposed
the peasantry.

while:

*"You so white and frail and pale
And me so deeply me"*

immediately recalls:

*"Makes thee a gleesome, fleasome
Thou, and me a wretched Me"*

of *Departmental Ditties*.

These comparisons are certainly not intended to be disparaging, but on the contrary to show the ancestral descent of a great and legitimate pedigree. Indeed, one of the most absurd facets of contemporary criticism is a tendency to suggest that, because from time to time an author is "like" an earlier writer, there must be something wrong about his own approach. Nothing could be greater rubbish.

A powerful aspect of Mr. Betjeman's poetry is his capacity to accept a love-hate or a nostalgia for something at once ludicrous and moving. On the one hand we are presented with, say, Croydon as a symbol of unalluring suburban life; on the other, Croydon as the almost idyllic cradle and lifetime anchorage of Uncle Dick.

This ambivalence is remarked upon by Lord Birkenhead in his sympathetic and thoughtful introduction, which also draws attention to Betjeman as a poet of landscape. Landscape is especially notable in the Irish poems, which paint with a peculiarly skilful brush the Irish scene, usually portrayed in the metre of its native poets, yet at the same time in a manner having nothing in common with them:

*"Slanting eyes of blue, unweeping,
Stands my Swedish beauty where
Gusts of Irish rain are sweeping
Round the statue in the square;
Corner boys against the walling
Watch us furtively in vain,
And the Angelus is calling
Through Dungarvan in the rain."*

It would be difficult—in my opinion impossible—to point to a contemporary poet of greater originality or more genuine depths of feeling.

ANTHONY POWELL

Along the Road to Frome. Christopher Hollis, *Harrap*, 17/6

A rather rum autobiography. The chief feeling one has on putting it down is of often having been made to laugh while reading a series of forceful tracts on this and that—education as represented by Eton, Oxford and Stonyhurst; fiscal policy; America and imperialism; Parliament; growing old. Not all of these subjects have much to do with the author's original purpose—to explain why he is a Roman Catholic—but his ideas are stimulating and give the impression of having been thought out from first principles by an innocent intelligence; this provides a context for his two short focal passages that actually deal with Catholicism; the first describes the reasons for his conversion, which he says were inadequate, and the second for his continued belief, which are convincing and moving, even if reasons of faith as much as of reason.

The thread of personal history which links all this is purposely subdued, curious without being extraordinary, and very amusing. Mr. Hollis must hold several records for having ludicrous things said to him by serious people on serious subjects. Or perhaps it is just that his questioning mind perceives jewels which the rest of us might pass by.

P. D.

Tea at Shadow Creek. Geoffrey Cotterell. *Eyre and Spottiswoode*, 16/-

Half this racy, short-chaptered, fast-moving novel describes the shipboard adventures of a rather desperate young man turning his back on failures in love and commerce, and half his apprenticeship as an underwear salesman in the outback of Australia. As a novel it is slightly broken-backed, but through the eyes of its hero, who is engagingly honest, we are given a good idea of the curious social life of a liner, its coteries forming and dissolving and its romances blossoming and withering overnight; while the impression of the strange pattern of Australian life is the most vivid I have read.

Mr. Cotterell is a ruthless satirist, with compassion up his sleeve. Although rich in situation, this amusing novel is mainly concerned with the comic shapes of character, with all kinds of people briefly and sharply drawn. The hero himself stands out in three dimensions, and poor Miss Canaris, the ingrown spinster who has her sad fling with a smooth-tongued crook, is an admirably perceptive creation.

E. O. D. K.

A Shot in the Dark. David Garnett. *Longmans*, 13/6

The freshness and fantasy of Mr. Garnett's earlier works are regrettably absent from this tale of Robert Harcourt, a Europeanized American who is taught true love by the mayor's daughter in a small Italian hill-town where a Dianic



cult flourishes in secret. Gemma, a self-educated child of nature, brought up by a witch in the mountains after her mother's murder by fascists, is "steeped in Shakespeare's sonnets"; the love-making is described in metaphors of waves and shores, while a species of drama is provided by a power-seeking gangster who converts the bishop's palace into a dance-hall on Saturday nights. Later, Gemma becomes captivated by Robert's ex-mistress, a bi-sexual *femme fatale*; and a triangular situation develops, of a type common enough in Soho and Chelsea but not less tedious when transplanted to a Mediterranean climate. Perhaps English novelists should no longer be allowed to write about Italy, and the intoxicating words "Grappa," "Buon giorno," and "Ciao" forbidden them, as sliding panels and mysterious Chinamen are to detective-story writers.

J. M-R.

The Young Devils. John Townsend. *Chatto and Windus*, 15/-

These reminiscences of London Secondary Modern Schools are funny and terrifying. Mr. Townsend tries to be charitable and gay; but his picture of illiterate and violent near-criminals leagued with their families against the teaching staff rings true and is confirmed by other authors—for example, Mr. Croft and Mr. Blisshen.

Until teachers discipline the layman, whether customer or boss, as the doctors have done, schools will continue to be caught between hostile parents, amateurish governing bodies and Heads appointed for non-educational reasons. Mr. Townsend explains that the portrait of his Head is fictional and composed of the worst qualities of other people's head teachers. Anxious only to avoid criticism from outside the school and giving accounts on Speech Day of educational projects which bear no relation at all to what actually occurs in the class-room, this composite Head, although not a bully to his staff, is a grim warning of what

can happen when the appointment of technicians lies entirely in lay hands.

R. G. G. P.

Bang to Rights. Frank Norman. *Secker and Warburg*, 15/-

"So there you are the people on the outside just don't realize what it is like in the nick," and "the difference between Corrective Training and ordinary bird is none egstant," so any way 1797 Norman, sentenced to a lagging three years C.T., gives you the whole routine in Wandsworth, Chelmsford and the Isleland (Camp Hill), being dubbed up in your peter, out on exercise, or having to eat meat pie that stunk and samerliener just like glue Storeys about screws (or twirls) not to menchiun the Bullie-Beaf (Cheiff Wardour), snout barrons, grasses, and caricures like Filthy Frank who never washed his self and all ways slept in his cloths, fighting Fred the twirl who had done every thing ectept bird, or the queer who told how Queen Victoria refused to sign Disraillys bill putting the block on lezbianisam. His atetued and sence of houmer maney times courses a geezer to raw with larffter, and now that he's out-side every thing should be done to perswade him to live in fuschia an industruios litterey life.

J. M-R.

The Last Medici. Harold Acton. *Methuen*, 32/-

Mr. Harold Acton's account of the final generations of the great family of Medici was first published in 1932. He has now revised this unusual and entertaining book which is once more available. The Medici, who had begun as brilliant patrons of the arts, declined at the end of the seventeenth century into a state of eccentricity that was not far from madness. This is their story. The last of them, the widowed Electress Palatine, died in 1743. Our diplomatic representative at Florence, Sir Horace Mann, wrote: "The common people are convinced she went off in a hurricane of wind; a most violent one began this morning and lasted for about two hours, and now the sun shines as bright as ever, this is a proof; besides, for a stronger, John Gaston [Gian Gastone Medici] went off in the same way . . ." Mr. Acton shows that, whatever their failings, there was also something to be said for these later Medici as rulers.

A. P.

On to Timbuctoo. Anthony Carson. *Methuen*, 12/6

Timbuctoo is a symbol of freedom or, at one point, an incarnation of the author himself. Naturally he never gets there; bound for the Azores on a secondhand submarine with a cargo of imitation jewellery and cocaine, he ends up deticking tortoises and smoking kief in Morocco, or eating locusts ("like brown paper and peanuts") in rose-red Tiznit. A cocktail is named after him in Santiago; commissioned to write a book about Fez, he is sent by an editor to Blackpool

("The Fez of the North") instead; and always he is washed up again among the Guinesses and Irish poets of Camden Town or in the crepuscular Soho club where the eight McGregors dance their eternal reel. The linking together of these separate episodes into a continuous narrative argues considerable technical skill: while not even a rare disease of the ear that caused him to appear constantly drunk, or having all his teeth removed by a German dentist who was an authority on the cost of world-defence, have damped the exuberant joy of living which Carson communicates so effectively to the reader.

J. M-R.

Eimi: The Journal of a Trip to Russia.
E. E. Cummings. Calder, 14/6

Mr. E. E. Cummings, one of America's foremost poets, and author of that great book, *The Enormous Room*, should be much better known in this country. I think it would hardly be going too far to describe him as the only effective living writer of "experimental" prose. This account of his visit to Russia was written as long ago as 1931: it remains tremendously funny—even if, at times, rather like too rich plum-pudding—and perhaps the best description of the immediate impact of Soviet manners upon a visitor from the free world that has ever

appeared. It would be absurd to pretend that the convolutions of Mr. Cummings's style do not demand a little self-adjustment on the reader's part, but the result of this adjustment is a series of snorts of laughter and an admiration for the author's extraordinary power of conveying atmosphere. This, for example, in a Moscow bank: "Dreamily in rags a green-skinned hunchback passes, picking his teeth; and in rags repasses, rubbing one dreamily larger than the other ear..." The volume is an American paperback edition (Evergreen Books) marketed in Great Britain.

A. P.

AT THE PLAY

The Bright One (WINTER GARDEN)

RETAILED at breakfast next morning, *The Bright One* sounds ingenious and amusing, another successful marriage of myth and modernity. A nymph, long imprisoned in a tree by the jealous Hera, escaping in the body of a drowning English schoolmistress to the embarrassment of a conventional English farmer on a Greek cruise; and, innocent of history and current behaviour, brought back to stay with his up-to-date grandmother in

Dorset. So far, good; and even better that Zeus should immediately be on her trail again, terrifying an Italian airport as a bull, emerging from a call-box telephone in a shower of gold, taking possession of one of the farm swans, and finally seducing her in the guise of the young farmer, fast asleep upstairs. It sounds, I had to admit, as if Judy Campbell (under the pseudonym of J. M. Fulton) had packed her play with ripe incident.

Why then must it be called a failure? Because, having got this delicious creature to England, Miss Campbell makes things much too easy for her and does scarcely anything to exploit her alarming situation against a background of which she is ignorant; there isn't even a contretemps with the vicar about the goings-on of the gods. Because, to be blunt, the talk isn't good enough to cover these missed opportunities. And because too much of it is simply incidental chatter by largely superfluous characters. That they are in the distinguished hands

REP SELECTION

Birmingham Rep, *The Royal Astrologers*, new fairy play, for a season.

Library Theatre, Manchester, *Hans, the Witch and the Goblin*, until February 7th.

Nottingham Playhouse, *Towards Zero*, thriller, until December 20th.

Leatherhead Theatre, *Yes and No*, comedy, until December 20th.



Phæa—KAY KENDALL

[The Bright One

Tom—MICHAEL GWYNN

of Gladys Cooper, Frederick Leister and Hugh McDermott makes it all the sadder that they should, so to speak, be merely playing out time.

With the casting of Kay Kendall as the heroine I have no quarrel. Within the comedy's limits she does everything she could for it, changing delightfully from the hockey-striding confidence of the schoolmarm to the wide-eyed mischief of the intruder, and back again, once she is married to her host and Zeus's twins are born. This is the first time I have seen her on the stage. She speaks beautifully, and would, one guesses, have been at home in the greater ironies the play so badly needs. As the farmer Michael Gwynn seemed to me unnecessarily the whale-boned product of the less resilient sort of education.

In his production Rex Harrison could surely have put a little more satiric edge on so wild a situation. Here, after all, is a Greek dryad, who has never heard of the war and has never seen a helicopter, staying with the upper crust of county society—and for most of the evening she could be mistaken for a slightly odd deb.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

The Grass is Greener (St. Martin's—10/12/58), distinguished new comedy.

Hot Summer Night (New—3/12/58), honest play about the colour bar. *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* (Royal Court—10/12/58), good drama of a coloured slum in Trinidad.

ERIC KEOWN

AT THE PICTURES

Bell, Book and Candle
Nowhere to Go

IT is essentially theatrical, and that has been the burden of my complaint against some things I didn't like much, and my main reason, so it seemed at the time, for disapproving of them; *Indiscreet*, for instance. Nevertheless *Bell, Book and Candle* (Director: Richard Quine) is extremely enjoyable: "mere entertainment" if you like, but intelligent, witty, amusing, well acted, cunningly directed, beautifully designed and a continuous pleasure even to look at. It is easy to deprecate what may be briefly described as *gloss*, as if it were a negative, unworthy quality; the fact remains that, skilfully and sensibly used, it can add very much to one's enjoyment. And the essentially theatrical pattern here—I don't know, the original play by John van Druten, but the fact that there was a stage original is quite obvious—in no way spoils the many kinds of satisfaction that the film can give. Perhaps much of the pleasure does come from things that are merely decorative; but the point is that they are so beautifully done and smoothly integrated that one doesn't recognize them as merely decorative until afterwards. And then, what—in a piece of straightforward entertainment—does it matter?

This is the light-hearted fable about present-day witchcraft: the gay brother, the beautiful sister and the twittering aunt who have "strange powers." The sister, Gillian (Kim Novak), uses her magic to contrive a meeting with a man who has taken her fancy, and the story is concerned to show how in spite of herself she comes to love him in a normal human way, and hence—for human feelings and human failings are incompatible with witchcraft—loses her magical powers. Her brother Nicky (Jack Lemmon) play with their magic irresponsibly, for fun, but she is more serious-minded and is able to do quite impressive things like calling up thunderstorms at will. The situation is happily resolved when the man (James Stewart), who has been repelled by discovering how unfairly he was captured, sees her distress at losing him and realizes she is human after all.

It is all done with perfect lightness of touch and timing both of lines and effects, and decorated with fantastically amusing detail and odd characters. One's interest is constantly stimulated by variation of scene, and the art direction (Cary Odell) and photography (James Wong Howe)



[*Bell, Book and Candle*

Gillian Holroyd and Familiar—KIM NOVAK and Pyewacket

make every scene pleasing in colour and composition. (A typical one, comparatively simple: the couple on top of the Flatiron Building in the snow—a lovely design in black, white and red against a misty blue background.) When a trivial story is done as attractively as this, the result is worth anyone's attention.

... And it's a bit thick, I suggest, that a film should actually be disparaged on the ground that it is well done. I don't say that this is exactly what has happened to *Nowhere to Go* (Director: Seth Holt), but in some published criticisms of it there has certainly been at least a hint of discontent and irritation with its confident, skilful use of truly cinematic methods and devices, as if these were distracting and meant merely for display.

My own feeling was pleasure and gratitude that the makers of this British pursuit melodrama had been willing to credit their audience with intelligence and powers of observation. For once, inessential links are omitted and effects are not rubbed in; hence narrative speed—which in itself is exhilarating.

The story is basically a "crime does not pay" episode about a man on the run after a robbery in London. Things go more and more wrong, and the title sums up the predicament that finally defeats him. The film is full of excellently-observed London detail—the time is the present, even to the strings of Christmas cards in a flat and the shopping crowds in Oxford Street—and entertaining, credible minor characters. At innumerable moments some sight or sound freshens a shot that would otherwise have been, though perfectly

adequate, ordinary. It is imaginative film-making like this that makes all the difference between mild interest and active enjoyment.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

There are two other new ones meant for the Christmas crowds. *tom thumb* (as they insist on spelling it) is simple fairy-tale stuff in the old Disney convention, with some good emphatic fun from Terry-Thomas and Peter Sellers as the villains. *The Square Peg* presents Norman Wisdom as two different characters in a slapdash Army comedy with funny moments. (The mere sight of him as anything other than the usual "little Norman" is hysterically amusing to plenty of people.) There is a good Western, *Man of the West* (10/12/58). Still the best and most satisfying film in London is *Wild Strawberries* (5/11/58).

Nothing special among the releases. The only one reviewed here was *The Two-Headed Spy* (3/12/58).

RICHARD MALLETT

ON THE AIR

In a Dancing Mood

WHAT an evergreen trouper is Victor Silvester! Spry and unruffled amid the honking clamour which attends the progress of ballroom dancing, he persists in his life-work of perpetuating an anachronism. Fortnight after fortnight, in "Television Dancing Club" (BBC), he gravely frolics in his own little backwater, presenting us with scenes that seem to me as remote and stylized as the solemn operations of

Saturday-afternoon Morris dancers down side-streets in our market towns. Who are these suave and elegant couples—the men in tails, the women in almost identical gowns—who swirl about a dream-ballroom, faultlessly executing the steps of the fox-trot, or the one-step, or conceivably the mazurka? The huddled shufflers in Lou Preager's late lamented sessions, elbowing their way in and out of camera-range, buzzing and barging and chattering in the sweaty scrum of a night out at the local palais, used to bring to the little screen everything but the colour of such traditional social occasions. One could almost catch the mingled fragrance of hair-cream, talcum powder, light ale, warm taffeta, lily-of-the-valley scent, and sweet rolls spread with lobster paste. But Mr. Silvester's timeless figures are creatures of a fairy tale. The ladies will not ease off one shoe under the table just before the last waltz: the gentlemen will not have to blunder cursing through a rain-swept car-park at 1 a.m., with tousled tie and sherry-spattered shirt-front. They do not even smell of moth balls, for despite their air of poshness and breeding they are manifestly participating neither in a Hunt Ball nor the Grand Annual Select Dance of the Incorporated Nut and Bolt Manufacturers, refreshments extra, for they are ridiculously sober. No, they dance in limbo, to the music of Mr. Silvester's familiar fiddle and saxophone—those sweetly yearning notes that have been with us (unchanged, velvety, reassuringly predictable) ever since the far-off days of the beige, uneasy 'thirties.

This musty answer to "Oh Boy!" and "Six-Five Special" is enormously popular, for Mr. Silvester has a way with him, and I understand that thousands of viewers take advantage of his astonishingly brief fortnightly dancing lesson. (His recent sedate, precise exhibition of something called the New York variation in the Cha-cha-cha was almost as charming as the shyly shimmying way he conducted what was announced as a rock-'n'-roll number.)

On the whole I approve of this show, for we tend to be starved of fantasy these days. I am soothed by the pert and graceful movements of the teams of formation dancers; I dreamily back my fancy in each heat of the Dancing Club Trophy Competition, secure in the knowledge that I will never find out who won; and I am lost in wonder at the daring of the producer in having the show compered (or "hostessed") by a pretty girl named Rosalie Ashley, who makes her announcements in accents of the most eerie refinement, with a naïve uncertainty about grammar, and the general demeanour of a dear little tot who has been bullied into reciting at a grown-ups' party, and is half afraid that that horrid uncle with the damp moustache is going to come lurching across to kiss her at any moment.



[Dancing Club

VICTOR SILVESTER

I am glad Daniel Farson has turned his attention from making our flesh creep with his people in trouble, and intends to examine success for us in a series called "Success Story" (A-R). His preliminary chat, with his father, was refreshing: I could have taken a great deal more of Negley Farson's reminiscences, whether they were concerned with success or not, and I hope that somebody may persuade him to talk to us again. As to the blond and solemn younger Mr. Farson, I was often uneasy about his probings into peoples' troubles. I hope all that ponderous laying bare of tortured souls under dramatic lighting was justified, and that some help or consolation was brought to even a handful of viewers. For myself, I always felt selfishly resentful of having my sitting-room turned into a clinic. I will be far happier wallowing in the trials of those who Reached the Top. HENRY TURTON

LETTERS

To the Editor of *Punch*

SIR,—On the contrary I am distressed to hear that your correspondent, Mr. William J. Hopkins, has smashed up his "late Georgian walnut settee," for it must have been an interesting and unusual piece for that period in that timber. From the sound of it I am less sad about his small silver Gesso table, though I think it a pity that he should have taken such drastic action on the strength of a misreading of my argument.

Yours faithfully,

PAUL REILLY

London, S.W.7

BEALE STREET BLUES

To the Editor of *Punch*

SIR,—

If Beale-street could talk,
If Beale-street could talk,
Atkinson would have to take his
chair and walk
A ste—ep or two, to Memphis,
Tennessee,
He'll find that Beale-street's in
that city and not in New Orleans.

Yours faithfully

GEOFFREY BROWNE

Leek, Staffs.

PROPS

To the Editor of *Punch*

SIR,—Miss Hazel Townson, in her discourse on the amateur theatre, has hit the nail right on the head. The procuring of stage properties is a dying art. Consequently, the lot of the amateur stage-carpenter is becoming an almost impossible one. We have recently found it necessary to make a four-poster bed, a tree and two hedges, to make no mention of the innumerable asses' heads that go to make a season. At the moment we are trying to borrow a fourteen-foot-high spiral staircase. We are unable to find one solitary person willing to lend us one for a short time in February. The best offer we have had so far is the use of a small lighthouse.

Yours faithfully,

Leeds

SYDNEY IRVING

CALCULATED RISK

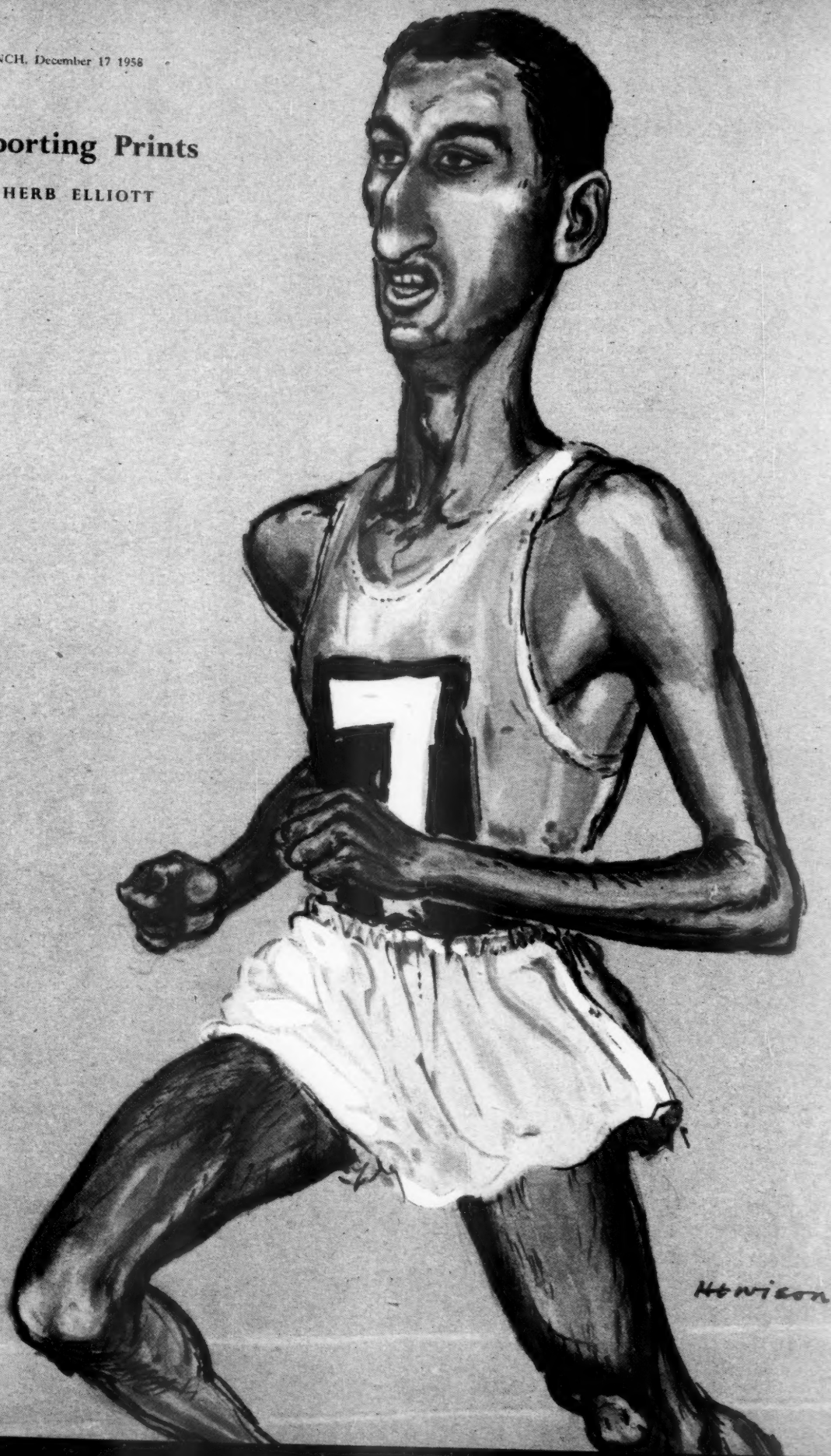
WE hear of a man who hesitated to give an esteemed friend a PUNCH subscription in case the esteemed friend should give him one, and both should feel foolish under fifty-two weeks' cross-fire through each other's letter-boxes. The risk is there, of course. Be bold, nevertheless. What could be more delightful than to give what you most want yourself—and then to get it after all? It is possible that it may not happen, naturally. But look at the date. This is your last week to try. A Greetings Card will announce your gift. Subscriptions: Great Britain and Eire £2 16s.; Canada (By Canadian Magazine Post) £2 10s. (\$7.25); Elsewhere Overseas £3 (U.S.A. \$9.00). Write to: Department ED., PUNCH, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4. U.S.A. and Canadian readers may remit by cheques on their own banks. Other overseas readers should consult their bankers or remit by postal money order.

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PUNCH, December 17 1958

Sporting Prints

V HERB ELLIOTT



The Nightingale Raged

By EVOE

Reflections on reading of radioactivity among migrants

I HAVE news of the nightingale. Impossible, you urge. But wait. I might easily say that the modern nightingale has become radioactive, since this has happened, so a professor of zoology tells us, to many of our migrating birds which are now in Africa. But I let that pass.

I think the nightingale was always a radioactive fowl. If the charmer had written its autobiography (and why not in these days?) the work would have been strewn with phrases like these:

"Very early in my career I saw that I must have a master plan . . . I could not permit interference with my strategy . . . the thickets were full of red tape . . . I resolved to take the field when other songsters were dumb . . . this gave me a free larynx . . . much nonsense has been written about my psychology, especially by the ignorant classical poets . . . I still consider that my programme was a permanent success, and will so remain in history."

Yet obscurity still shrouds the nature of the nightingale's song. Is it gay or is it sad? Tereu, tereu. Jug-jug. It gurgles, it trills, it sings of love, it sings of sorrow. Is it dirge or is it roundelay? To every lover, to every poet you might fancy, his own or her own nightingale, talking to the rose or talking to the moon, or merely singing on and on with a maddening insistency.

For England Coleridge, always pontifical, laid down the law:

"A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!"

And then after a sip or two of opium:

"'Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds and hurries and precipitates

With fast thick warble his delicious notes."

Another swig, I suppose—

"And murmurs musical and swift jug-jug

And one low piping sound more sweet than all."

Keats only met Coleridge once, near Ken Wood, and was overwhelmed by the honour of being introduced to him. He says that one of the subjects they spoke about was nightingales, and clearly Coleridge issued his commands. That I think is the reason why Keats' nightingale was so happy, though one might have expected it to be more in sympathy with the poet's own despondent mood. Triumph perhaps but also pain.

A rather more prosaic view of the performance informs us:

"Most striking are the extremely rapid, loud 'chooc-chooc-chooc-chooc . . .' and the fluty, much higher-pitched 'piōō' repeated rather slowly in a magnificent crescendo," and the authority goes on to say that "genuine imitations occasionally occur." For shame!

Nevertheless, whether rich or liquid or bubbling or piping or chuckling,

neither Greek nor Roman nor Persian nor Western European has ever awarded the loud bassoon to the bird, nor put any drums and trumpets into its repertoire. Yet at the end of Boris Pasternak's wonderful book, *Doctor Zhivago*, I find translations of some of his poems in which, though I fully understand the mood, it seems to me that the nightingale as a prima donna encompasses an entirely new range.

"In the fire of sunset,
In the charcoal distance of branches,
A nightingale raged
Like an echoing tocsin."

And again:

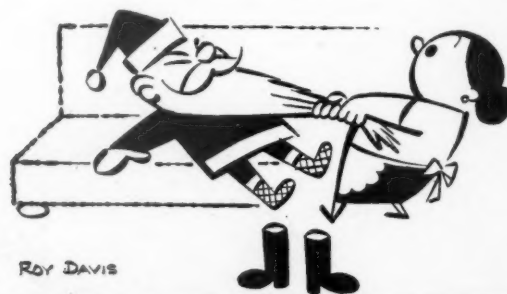
"Out there, far off, in the dense forest,
On that white night of Spring,
The nightingales filled the woods
With the thunder of their praise-giving."

A tocsin, I take it, is a bell that summons to battle, and though Brownings speaks of nightingales "applauding" I had supposed that applause was sung, and not that the roof cracked and the house came down.

Was it then no idle boast of Bottom's that he would roar the Duke's party as 'twere any nightingale? The gramophone record leaves me doubtful. I must wait till summer returns, and this talented vocalist splits the welkin again.

"Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree."

It was the thermonuclear nightingale.



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